



I want to tell my mom that I'm sorry for doing drugs, partying, and not listening to her. I want to tell her I'm sorry for stealing, lying, corrupting, manipulating, and deceiving. I want to tell her I'm sorry, I really do... but deep down in side I don't feel sorry... not at all. Maybe I'm not sorry 'cause I've lived that life for too many years. I'm sorry for making her cry, I really am for that. I don't like to see my mom cry. I guess I'm sorry for scaring her, but I don't know if I'm sorry for being me.

read the rest of Basket Case's piece on page 4

Welcome back, loyal Beat readers! It seems like ages since we last embraced! Well, here we are with yet another powerhouse edition of some of the most powerful writings you will read anywhere in this great land of ours.

This week we are particularly excited to welcome our young colleagues from the Challenge Unit and the New Foundations Unit up in Solano County Juvenile Hall! These young writers step up huge with their thoughtful contributions. We want to particularly thank Unit Supervisors, Dwight Dalton and Ann-Marie Thomas for their support in making everything move so smoothly during our time in their facility. This week's pieces need no further introduction; we are putting all their great effort on blast, for your reading pleasure. Enjoy!

As some of you know, this editor who was joined by colleague Hanif Bey, ventured out to hot and muggy Washington DC last week, to start our initial workshops in Oak Hill Youth Center, which is a part of the D.C. Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services. We were also joined by longtime Beat colleague Alex Moe, who now resides in DC.

Well, during our week-long visit, we did our very best, given the time allowed, to reach out to the community. We met with various youth workers/leaders, to share The Beat Within and our ideas about implementing our program in the nation's capital. Everyone we met was very supportive and encouraging, while sharing their own insights as frontline workers to possible funding leads. We also had the great privilege to re-hook-up with our old friend and colleague David Muhammed who, as we told you in an earlier editorial note, is now the Chief of Committed Services, and has truly been the catalyst in getting The Beat Within program and publication into Oak Hill. Especially given his many years working with us here at The Beat Within — close to a decade — he knows how important this program is to the young people and how valuable it is for all parties involved in the young peoples' lives. We also want to say it's so great to meet up once again with Oak Hill Superintendent Dexter Dunbar. As the Superintendent, Dexter informed his frontline staff of our program coming onto the units, which made our work so much smoother. It is such a pleasure working alongside Dexter and David. Their support speaks volumes.

As for the workshops, excellent stuff!! It was great meeting the young people. It was great hearing their thoughts, reading their work, sharing the latest Beat within issue with them too, especially given that the issue we shared with them was the issue that featured "the White House" on the cover. That art was given to us during our last visit. Leaving the facility all we heard from the young people and the staff was when we were coming back. WE wish tonight, but, we'll get there!

By the way, in a few weeks you will read the work that was produced from the initial three writing workshop sessions we held.

Time is ticking... It's almost 3 p.m. We need to speed this editorial note up. Wow, we wish words would just appear on this page (we bet you Beat writers know how that feels), but unfortunately, that's not the case, so, let's see what kind of valuable ramble we can produce in a few minutes! Ready? Here goes...

Our next visit to DC will be August 25-28th.

It is our goal to set up meetings with funders those three days to talk about funding the Oak Hill workshops, and to continue to do outreach with other Washington DC community-based organizers (CBO's).

We will also organize a meeting with local CBO's to attract potential Beat facilitators in DC. David Muhammad has so kindly offered to host this at his office. It is our goal to send out an invitation next week with a description about The Beat, job description for facilitators, etc.

The only way this is going to work is if we get the buy-in of not only the institution, but the community as well. It is our number one goal to find facilitators ASAP! Folks who are ready and willing to do workshops weekly! It's a step-by-step process, but in the end we will have all the right players in place, and the DC Beat will be a weekly program as it is everywhere else.

We don't think any of us thought it would take this long to get things up and running, but if we are to do it right, then you best believe we are taking the right steps. The goal is to see The Beat in DC for years and years to come, at least until every child is free from the criminal justice system. That's the plan there and the plan here. One workshop and issue at a time!

OK, here's the four topics that were discussed prior to the writing in the workshops...

First topic, "Saying 'I'm Sorry'" — There is no way of going through life without being sorry for things we've done or said, whether we actually apologize or not. Even when we "get away with it," we all wish we could take back some things we've done, or some particularly hurtful words we've spoken. When was the last time you said you were sorry to someone for any reason at all? And, if you haven't apologized, is there someone who deserves an apology from you? On the flip side, has someone apologized to you? Tell us about an apology you gave or received (or that you should give or receive). What led you to say you were sorry, and how did it make you feel when you did it?

The second topic, "If this is all there is" — In every issue of The Beat, we read tributes to lost homies that pray for them to "Rest In Paradise" or to spend eternity in a "Thug Mansion." But what if there is no Paradise? What if there is no Hell? What if this is all any of us gets — one life to make the most (or worst) out of? If you knew there was nothing beyond this life, would it change the way you live? In what ways? And for those who are already non-believers, what if you learned that there is a God who judges you after all? Would that cause you to change anything in your life? Does what you believe about life-after-death affect the way you choose to live?

The third topic, "My proudest accomplishment" — Whatever we've done in our lives to be ashamed of, we've also done things that make us proud, even when others don't know or don't acknowledge our accomplishments. We'd like you to think back to one or more of those accomplishments, and tell us what you did that made you proud of yourself. Then think about what you hope to accomplish when you walk out of here and put this unhappy period of your life behind you. Tell us what you plan to be proud of in the future.

Last but not least, "I saw..."

Don't forget, if you like any of topics you just read, please do not hesitate to write from one of these topics and send it our way!

We'll close this note with a big thank you for taking the time to read the latest editorial note. This means plenty to us to document The Beat life in our favorite publication. This issue goes out to the young people in Solano County! Welcome aboard The Beat train!! We're moving on! Next stop, issue 13.30. See you then!

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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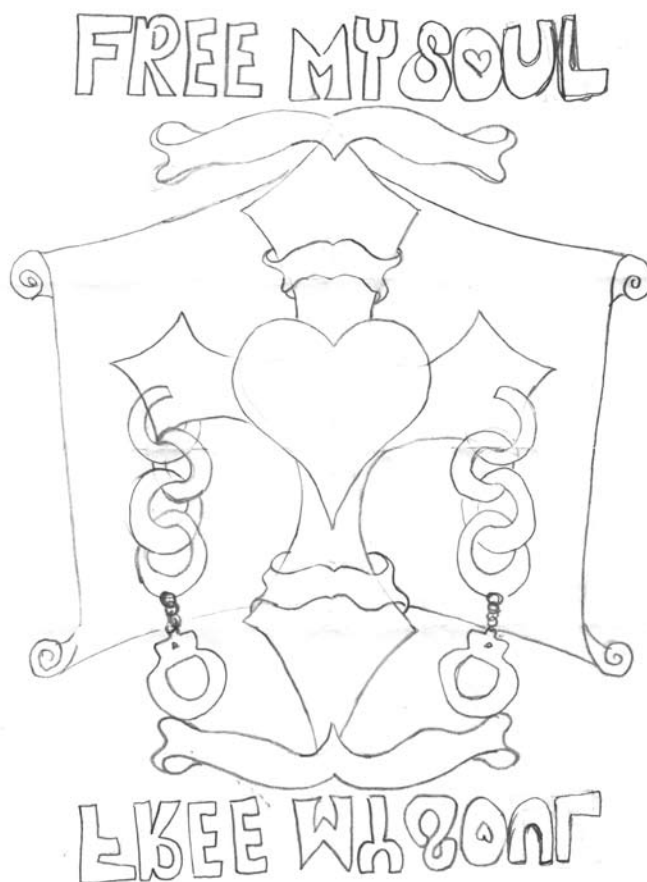
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Perfect Picture

If I could, I would paint a perfect picture
you and me, the perfect mixture.
To be with you, it's like being in the sky--
If I couldn't have you, I'd probably break down and cry.
I used to dream for someone like you
but it was only a fantasy
but when I met you it turned into reality.
You showed me dreams really come true
from the very first time I laid eyes on you.
Sometimes I get lonely
only in search for a hug with two things on my mind,
freedom and the woman I love

-Guany

From The Beat: You do paint a good picture here, what would make it perfect is your freedom and return. Do what it takes to have what is truly meaningful to you.

Saying "I'm Sorry"

I always had trouble saying "I'm sorry" for the fact that I didn't wanna look like a punk. But now that I'm locked up, I can think of a thousand things I'm sorry for.

I'm sorry for letting my family down and always getting mad when I didn't get what I wanted. My brother is going to be a teenager in a few weeks, and I'm sorry that I can't be there for him when he needs advice or just a Big Brother talk. I'm really sorry because I know I'm going to miss my daughter's first birthday because I'm going to be locked up. But being in here, I've been doing a lot of thinking. You can't be sorry forever; you just gotta learn from your "sorries."

- Jericho

From The Beat: You sound more like a nice brother and a caring father than a punk, so we don't think you have to worry about that! Your feelings sometimes show you what means most to you. The fact that you feel sorry can help motivate you to do what it takes to be there when you can be—and, in the meantime, to do what it takes now to make your program an opportunity for you to grow.

Family

I saw drugs and things.
I need to get out of this life.
I need to change my life
'cause I'm tired of seeing these drugs and these streets.
I need God in my life to stay away from drugs and get my life back together. I want my family to love me again, that's why I need to stop.

-Toothpick

From The Beat: Every morning decide how you want to live that day. Put as many good days together as you can. Soon you won't be so tired, and with time, your family won't be scared to love you again.

I Saw

I saw him looking at me.
I'm sure he saw me looking too.
My feelings are on high
my mind doesn't know what to do.
He's a picture perfect man
who has a very handsome smile.
I wish we could just sit and talk for a while
so we could get to know each other
but I would laugh and cry and smile.
Just to be able to touch him
I wouldn't know what to do.
Just don't play with my heart
cause even though I'm yours
don't play me for a fool.

-Queen Pooh

From The Beat: The dreamin' is nice. Check yourself though when something, or someone seems "picture perfect." We're glad you feel the laugh AND cry and smile, because it's all part of it. Relationships can be risky, listen to your mind as well as your heart...

I'm Sorry

I want to tell my mom that I'm sorry for doing drugs, partying, and not listening to her. I want to tell her I'm sorry for stealing, lying, corrupting, manipulating, and deceiving. I want to tell her I'm sorry, I really do... but deep down in side I don't feel sorry... not at all. Maybe I'm not sorry 'cause I've lived that life for too many years. I'm sorry for making her cry, I really am for that. I don't like to see my mom cry. I guess I'm sorry for scaring her, but I don't know if I'm sorry for being me.

All my life, I was told to be like someone else, I finally said to myself, I'm going to be me. I'm going to do what I like. I'm sorry for not keeping promises that I wanted to.

Today is my birthday and I could care less. Another year older... great.

I want to tell my mom I'm sorry for being too crazy. But maybe she will not care? I don't know. I love my mom; I really love her and I'm sorry for being so bad. But if this is all there is, and there is no heaven or hell, then I want to live my life everyday as if it's the last. Even if that means doing things that others might not approve of.

I want to tell my mom I'm sorry for being gay, but I won't. I love my life the way it was and I hate how it is now. I'm a hippie at heart, a gypsy. I can't help it. That's just who I am. I was born to be a free spirit, a person who loves life and sees everything as beautiful. But I am sorry for breaking my moms heart. I am.

-Basket Case

From The Beat: You don't sound like a "basket case." It is important to have the strength to be true to yourself, it IS your life, and it can be very difficult when people are judging you. We can make mistakes, but who we are is not a mistake. Clean up what you can and keep seeing the beautiful.

Shot At A Young Age

Ey, what's up Beat? This is Lil' Elfy. I'm going to tell about some stuff that happen to me. When I was in my first year as a teen, I got shot; it was bad. I was at my auntie' house having a good time, and at last it was nighttime.

But I got to go. Peace Beat, and I love my java.

- Lil' Elfy

From The Beat: Peace to you too. We're glad you're still around to tell your story, and we had to cut some stuff—to keep the peace.

A Daily Decision

As I wake up in the morning, pistol on my side
Phone on the dresser, always ready to ride
I say to myself, do I want to go outside?
Into a world of hurt, where it's no place to hide
but sometimes I don't think, I keep my emotions inside.
Me as a young man, I need to learn what's right
'cause if I'm in the streets today, I might not come home tonight
and if I'm not home tonight I might not be alright
and if I'm not alright my mom won't sleep at night
and that's just a feeling I can no longer fight.
I could get gunned down, raped or tossed in a lake
and Mom not knowing what happened to me, her heart will break
and I thank God for heavenly sake
that that's a risk I'm not willing to take.
So I lay down, cancel everything out
close my eyes and began to hibernate

-J-dooski

From The Beat: We typed this almost as you wrote it. We're glad you're making the daily decision to stay alive. This piece has nice tricks and bounce. Thanks for stepping up and delivering this powerful contribution.

I'm Sorry

As I go through life, I say things that hurt people or do things that disappoint people.

I go through life without saying sorry and it eats me up inside like a broken heart knowing people are hurting from what I did to them.

As I build up the courage to say I'm sorry, I hope its not too late and I hope they will forgive me when I apologize for taking so long.

-Flynn

From The Beat: Better to say sorry late than never! Maybe you won't feel so eaten up inside if you can apologize also. It's worth a try.

Friends

Friend is just a word.

It's not the same as a cousin or a brother from another mother.

Friends will stab you in the back and laugh;
as they do so then they go about their business
like they don't even know you.

But a cousin and a brother will let you sleep at their house

when you have nowhere to go,

that's when you start calling them bro or cousin.

Friends can be friends one day and the next they tend to act another way.

It's hard to explain but it's the truth not a lie.

I'm just trying to help you get by.

So when you die from a friend who stabbed you in the back

or ran out from a fight,

you might want to listen to what I go to say

because it might happen to you one day.

-Yogi Bear

From The Beat: What you say is true sometimes. People can disappoint us in life. It's sad to think that betrayal is the best a friend has to offer. If you are a good friend, you'll find good friends. They do exist.

Saying Sorry

Once I said I was sorry and they forgave me. The action I did probably changed their life. The hardest part about it was I couldn't forgive myself. Every time I think about it haunts me. Saying sorry isn't enough.

-K

From The Beat: People say that forgiveness doesn't mean you forget, but that you love even though you don't like what happened. Be careful not to be so haunted that you can't learn from your mistakes and become the person you can be.

Saying I'm Sorry

Saying I'm sorry whenever I see my mom. I always feel sorry if I'm on a furlough or if she's coming to visit me. I'm always feeling sorry because of the fact that she loves me so much.

Now, because I've been locked up more than seven times and knowing that she's always going to be there for me when I get out. And now that I've been locked for more than six months, the only thing I've been thinking about is my mom and how much she's always been there and how much she loves me.

All I got to say is that I'm sorry for everything I've done in my life.

-Cei (Lei)

From The Beat: Feeling sorry can help motivate you to live it the way you would if you could stop and choose. You're lucky to have so much support-how can you return the favor (and all that love)?

RIP To My Role Model

What's good Beat? Me, nothing much just stuck in the halls, but yeah, I'm gonna write 'bout the best homie I ever had, in this messed up life, 'till I lost him. I have never been the same 'cause he was my role model in life.

He took me in when I didn't have anywhere to go. He fed me; kept me out of trouble, bought me clothes, and made sure I always had every thing I wanted.

Then one day he got shot in a drive by. I felt like the world was going to end, that there was nothing else to live for--but then this guy that was there with him told me that he had said before he just passed that he wanted me to be strong, and he wanted me to be some one in life.

So yeah I was down for a couple of weeks drinking, smoking, and playing wit' my nose, but then I got on my feet and everything, but I'm still not the same like when he was around. But yeah, I miss you and love you Dough Boy. 'Till I see you in paradise. Much love, you're in my heart and with me forever. RIP.

-Christopher Columbus

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing this testimony of what a good friend can be, and how much they can mean in your life. We're glad you know he's in your heart and with you forever, and are sorry for your loss.

Sorry

What does I am sorry even mean? Does it say that you feel bad about what you did or are you just saying it to feel better about yourself? I've said it to do both. Saying sorry always makes you feel better even though it doesn't change what you did or said.

When I really meant it is when I told my mom and dad I would quit smoking and I didn't. They caught me. I said I am sorry and I mean it because I did quit afterwards. Saying sorry and meaning it changes after what made you feel sorry.

Saying I am sorry and I didn't mean it is when I said I am sorry for coming to jail. I said sorry just to feel better because I still came back and disappointed my mom and dad. Just saying sorry and not meaning it is not changing what you said sorry about.

-Puppychow

From The Beat: We don't always get the lesson the first time. Luckily many times we get to keep trying. Can you mean you're sorry and not go back to jail before you no longer have another chance?

Death

When I was just 16 years old I saw my best friend get shot. She was walking down the street to my house. I really don't know why she was shot. But I think it was because of money.

In Richmond, somebody got shot over money or drugs. When Jennifer was shot, I didn't know what to do. I cried harder than I ever have before. I had to go to court; they even wanted me to go and identify the person. My mom didn't think it was a good idea. The police said if I identified the shooter or went to court, I'd be in danger. I went to court anyways and identified the shooter. We had to move.

To this day I'm still going to court dealing with her case. She has been dead almost two years now. I miss her so much and wish I didn't have to see her die four houses from my house. Rest in peace Jennifer J.

-Smiley F Baby

From The Beat: We appreciate your dedication to your friend, it can't be easy to keep going to court over this, or feel you are or were in danger yourself. What would she do for you today, if she could? What would she say to you about your life now, as your best friend?

A Day In The Hood

A day in the hood is always bad
A day in the hood is always sad
Playing with them thangs and being glad
while bein' a sav'
A day in the hood is not always hard
You be real with your stuff and doin' all you have
A day in the hood, look fo a job
Which all you do is sell them rocks
A day in the hood you would always have enemies
just like being in the Vietnam War

-Mookie

From The Beat: It is like war, and war is always supposed to be the LAST resort after every other option has been tried. The cost of loss of lives in war is supposed to be a sacrifice for greater freedom for future generations. Statistics show that education is what helps people stop going to prison. What does the Hood war accomplish?

My "Sorry"... Years Later

My "sorries" go out to a homie that had my back when we were outnumbered. We laugh and make jokes about the night we were horse playing. We laugh and point even if he's pushed to the limit, but that homie knows he is well respected. He's sitting here right next to me.

- Eduardo

From The Beat: We hope you can have each other's back now too as you make your way through your programs. Then when you're back out again, you can support each other again, knowing all that you both have learned.

Without You

Living without you is hard to do
you're up in jail now cause you acted like a foo'
Thinking we would make it to the end
but I guess it was all just pretend
Mijo was it worth it to shoot ese vato
Ila ni te puedo dar un abraso
Making plans for you and me
I even thought seeing you on your knees
Estos lo que pasa when you riding with the homies
now you in there feeling all lonely
Got myself caught up in the game
but I aint tryin' to end up the same
Riding without you by my side
me voy por un lado to let myself cry
Todos los homies say they miss you too
but it's funny how they don't even write you
This is what happens when you try to get attention
I even got myself in this detention
Pensando what's gonna happen to me
all I can do is just beg God please
You thought your boys were going to be by your side
but I was always the one who was ready to ride
You're behind bars without seeing your girl
got yourself caught up in a different world
Letting you go era muy difcil
It wasn't by the way you treated me
pero by the actions you chose in life
Pensando que un dia I would be your wife
I hope later on I see you at least one time
cause I'm not saying good bye
So now I got another homie facing time
because he got caught up with another crime

-Lady Happy

From The Beat: This is interesting writing. You are weaving 3 things together at the same time: Spanish and English, the story of being free and/or "caught up"—and finally the story of love and loss. It seems that by not saying good bye you have chosen to let it be for now.

No Way Out

I feel trapped
with no way out
I get mad sometimes, it makes me want
to shout
I'm locked up behind these bars
with no way out
I'm a criminal to these streets
trying to get out
I tried to escape
but then I lost count
I'm drowning in a sea full of blood
I'm feeling like New Orleans
when they had the flood
I'm surrounded by stress and pain
Where I'm from everyone carries
a thang
This world is dangerous
with no way out
These streets will eat you with no doubt
There's no way out the way I am livin'
They say we'll either be dead or in prison
Now if I am serious about getting my life back on track
I don't always have to look behind my back
There is a way out if you succeed
Just be successful and quit smoking weed

-Javon

From The Beat: It sounds like you feel really trapped by that life, and very aware of the future it could hold. So take your advice! Be successful and quit smoking weed. By the way, what's the first step to "being successful" in your life?

My Life Changes

What up? My name Richard. My worst thing Im ashamed of is the crime I'm in the hall for. They try to wash me, but I'm not trippin'. I wish I would be able to go back to that night, because I would have never did it. But I didn't know that at the time.

I changed their lives forever. They were scared to death. After that happen, it was a rap. I do regret it to the fullest, and hope one day they will forgive me

- Richard

From The Beat: You sound pretty straight about it now. The fact that you really care and are sorry is a good step forward. We had to edit out the details; you can't really talk about your case in the Beat. We hope one day they, and you, will forgive you too.

Praying

As I live confused and trapped in this life
I wonder to myself I if will lose or win.
They say the weak inherit the earth and the strong will
lead
but together we remain unhappy, stuck in greed.
The perception of tomorrow feels hopeless
I try real hard to keep my focus.
As I catch myself glancing through my rearview
wandering how I survived through the things I done
been through,
I got to make it to heaven for going through hell.
I done spent half of my life stuck in a cell.
I pray to God every night and keep on asking
hope He saves me a spot in thug's mansion.

-Tommygun

From The Beat: This is nice writing, nice thinking. It sounds like you don't want to be "stuck in greed." What's worth working for that's not money? Would that help your perception of tomorrow, if you knew what else to focus on? It doesn't really sound like you want to end up in a thug's mansion.

The Stupidity of Statistics

The stupidity of statistics leads to untrue beliefs, profiling, and a world full of misguided communities.

We think statistics show us. No! They actually "No" us. We are handing off our opportunity to a wonderful and adventurous life by letting statistics guide our path through life.

We only have one life to live. Why not live it? Hey! Life is yours! You're walking everyday, speaking, breathing, whatever the case may be. Not anyone else. You live your life, you control your emotions, you are the one that thinks about your every move.

Live up past statistics. Not live up to statistics. You want to know the stupidity of statistics? They lead me to jail, thinking I was a complete waste of life, and wanting me to hurt myself.

You know what? I'm living life with a smile. Not thinking about my statistic outlook. Now do you know the stupidity of statistics? Today I live... forever.

- Adventurous

From The Beat: You make a great argument about an old philosophical question about whether we are individuals or are our lives already decided by "statistics." Statistics didn't stop great artists and scientists like Beethoven and Einstein. We're proud you know to listen to your own self, your own life force, and don't let yourself be limited by statistics.

Saying I'm Sorry

Saying you're sorry doesn't resolve problems or get you out of them. To me personally sorry has many meanings and uses to it. One of them is just to get you off the hook, and second if you say sorry I think you should have meaning and show potential in how you say it in order for people to see you care--and maybe even have a change in you.

-Lb

From The Beat: We agree. The really important part is the "caring." When people don't care it's much easier to do things that hurt others or themselves. When you care you can use that energy to motivate you to expand that potential in you for solid change.

Time

Doing time ain't nothing nice...

But I should've thought about that before I did what I did.

Now it seems like I'm stuck in a jar with a closed lid.

17 with a kid, and I'm not even around.

This time I hit rock bottom with my face on the ground.

I pray every day that the Lord stays by my side.

I try to stay strong and not let the enemy take away my pride.

God tells me, "It's going to be okay. Have no fear."

But every time I look at my pictures, I always shed tears.

I went to court hoping the judge will give me a break.

I walked into the courtroom and my knees started to shake. They gave me 12 months and my heart dropped.

I looked at my mom hoping her tears will stop.

Now I gotta accept it and do my time like a man.

So for the next 12 months being locked up is where I stand. When my daughter comes to see me, I start to feel bad, Knowing she had to live a year of her life without a dad.

I told myself I'm turning to the light

Because I'm all tied up and the knot is to tight.

So I thank God for letting me read the Bible

Because in my eyes that's the way of survival.

- Jericho

From The Beat: We hear you feel stuck, and in a knot. You have some good ideas about how to make it through this time. Your daughter will need you for her whole life, long past this year--so work on yourself so you can be there for, and with her.

Twelve Steps Why Not Ten

Twelve, why not ten, because I have no shoes on

First step. Environment

Second step. Peer pressure

Third step. Maybe drugs maybe not

Fourth step. Not going to school

Fifth step. Not listening to your parents

Sixth step. Breaking the law

Okay we're half way there

Seventh step. You get a pass--you didn't get caught

Eight. You try more serious crimes

Ninth step. Not so lucky

Tenth step. Green/Blue jumpsuit

Eleventh step. Court

Twelfth step. Your room door closing

Twelve why not ten -- I'll tell you why

Because with no shoes on you can take two more shoes in your room than with shoes on.

-Twun-Twun

From The Beat: The steps are clear, but no idea what you mean about the "shoes?" At that point what difference does it make if you have shoes in your room or not? Are shoes some kind of metaphor for something else? Hmmm.

All There Is

If this is all there is

No heaven or hell

No after life or judgment day

Just what we have now

I think about it every night

Am I talking to "God"

Or is it a mistake

Something that isn't nothing at all

But I keep faith in "The Truth"

'Cause nothing is promised in life

And if this is all there is

Still for God I strive.

-Mrt

From The Beat: All this is worth a lot of thought. It is a personal choice, as you say. Let your choices help you live the life that has meaning for you. If this is all there is maybe heaven and hell are here.

My "Dear Momma"

I've said I'm sorry to a lot of people before in my life. But the person I haven't said sorry to and deserves it the most is my mom. Now that I'm getting older and more mature I'm realizing that she's the person I've hurt the most.

I've been trying to practice on how I'm going to tell her and I don't know why it's so hard to tell the person I love the most in my life that I'm sorry. I'm very thankful for everything she's done for me and I want to get the courage to tell her how I feel. I know if I do that I will have a lot of pressure off my chest.

Well I hope you could give me some advice Beat, because I think that's what I need the most thank you.

Lil' D

From The Beat: Well our advice is tell the truth, to say it however you can! Maybe you could write her a letter explaining with details what you are sorry about, and how you realized that you hurt her and how much you love her. Then maybe you could tell her in person too. Sometimes people can't forgive us right away, but even if this is the case you can start the process. No matter how you say it she'll appreciate it if you truly come from the heart.

My Life In And Out of Jail

I'm shmacked out, never calm, just really chaotic
My styles and my flows are hella exotic
I stay walking through streets smoking on a Newport
Wondering what's gonna happen when I show up for court

But sometimes when I go I get to walk out free
Or I got to get hand cuffed and go back to Juvie
Then get out and go back in, doing the same rotation
Just a ninja on the streets tryna get off probation
Ya can't be stoppin' and searchin' me for no flippin' reason

Tryna get me locked up before the end of the season
But forget the police, let me get my session
I was just letting off steam and a little aggression
So this is my life goin' in and out of jail
Wonderin' if there's even a heaven or hell
On this Earth... lost and cast under an evil spell
Opening my life for a story to tell
All right Then Beat!

- Anonymous

From The Beat: Nice writing! So sorry we had to edit harshly, however we wanted to get you printed. This "rotation" won't be entertaining when you hit 18. Whoa!

"My Hood"

What's up Beat? I couldn't think of anything to say about your topics so I'm finna write about my hood.

- Young Goofsteros

From The Beat: What's up back at ya. We couldn't print but one of your sentences. We'd like to see more of what you have to say...

The Death Of A Friend

One of my closest friends died in the hospital. He was a good homie; he didn't deserve to die, but sometimes there's just nothing you can do.

Well it starts like this; one day I was going to my friend's house to go and see how he was doing. I was on my way to see him when my friend James comes out of his apartment to catch up with me. Finally he went up to me and said, "I'm about to go to a party and drink, smoke weed, and get messed up." He had asked if I had wanted to come. I said that I couldn't and I had somewhere to go. He said that it was coo', so he went and I went.

The next day I'm doing something with my homies, J and R. When my homeboy J got a phone call saying that James was in the hospital.

My two homeboys and me were going to see him in the hospital. When we were on our way, we got another phone call from his mom saying, "James caught leukemia through the tubes we was breathing in. We finally got there with a warning saying he might not make it. Next thing you know he dies right in front of my face. I had wished that I had seen him before a gang jumped him. Me, J, and R go back to the house. We found out that the police found who the killer was.

Three days later we went to his funeral. It was an open casket and I couldn't stand seeing him in there. But all I could do is stop and pray hoping he was in a better place than he was before.

-Boots

From The Beat: We're sorry for the loss of your close friend. It's clear that it was important you did what you were going to instead of just following along with your friend. We edited this piece to make sure there's no details put out there that would keep this damage going. Think about what you'd say to James if you could, and then tell him in a prayer or your journal. What also would he have to say to you?

Meeting The Challenge

As many people, I want to do something with my life and desperately don't want to be a failure. I think that I always try to meet others' standards to look good in their eyes. I feel like I really haven't found who I am, and strive to be accepted.

I have anger problems. A lot of what I think, I got from my dad who beat my mom when my sisters and I were little. I'm not really sure what I want to be in life, but I know I want to succeed.

What I want out of the Challenge program is to learn how to work with people even when I might not like the person's behavior or attitude, so that when I get out, I can have experience in handling such issues that I might face in the real world, like at a job. So far since I have been in the Challenge program, I have learned many things and feel like I have grown.

I came in here when I was 16 and will leave when I'm 18. One thing that I particularly took notice to is that there is always going to be someone you don't really care for in a group; it's the same behaviors, just different faces. There is always that one who you might not like because of the behaviors they exhibit. But you still need to learn to work with each other because there is always a bigger goal in the end.

In this case, I think that my overall goal that I'm trying to accomplish is to finish my time, get as much as I can from the Challenge program and do it all without ever stepping a foot in County Jail. Since I have been here, I have had a great opportunity to catch up with a lot of my missing credits in school. I think that if I would have never ran into this roadblock, this "challenge," I would have fallen even further behind in school.

Unlike when I first came to Challenge, I'm not all beat up about being here. I now see that there is good, in even a bad situation. It's just what you make of it.

- Dorin

From The Beat: From this piece, we'd say it sounds like so far you are successfully doing your program and taking advantage of whatever opportunities to grow that you find along the way. Your perspective is great, and we hope you recognize what you have achieved, and that you achieve all the rest that you have set before you.

Music Slappin'

True story. One day the music was slappin'. I was half asleep at the time. I was waiting for my mother to wake me up because she always gets me up.

She says, "Antwon get up and do this, do that."

So I'm waiting for her to do that as I wait half asleep. Still, I listen to the music. Just waiting and hoping that she doesn't come wake me up for a long time.

After a while I wake up all the way and I notice I'm not at home. My mother isn't there. Only thing I can see is my toilet and these white walls.

-Twun-Twun

From The Beat: This piece reads like a movie, we can feel the rude awakening, and the isolation. Sounds like you miss your Mom.

It's A Cold Game

The game is crazy. Man, let me tell you. When I was little I used to admire the gangster lifestyle, but as I got older and older I started to realize how cold the game can be. It's not all just one big party like you see on TV, with sex, drugs, guns, and money.

I've seen that side, but I've seen the other side also. Getting shot at, patnas dyin', always on the lookout for suckas from other 'hoods. It's cool for a little bit, but when you're always catchin' cases an' gettin' locked up, it don't seem all that cool anymore. When your family is sad because they're missin' you and you're not there, I'm telling you man, it ain't cool.

Comin' to jail made me realize something. I realized that there's something more for me to do than be a gangster. Because it's not worth it. I've realized that family is precious and I need to spend as much time with them as possible. Friends will never be like family, because family is always there for you.

- Shadi Boi

From The Beat: What you're writing makes a lot of sense. We're so glad you realized there's something more for you to be! Don't forget that. Don't exchange the cold game for precious family. Live what you know, now.

I Am Sorry Mom and Thank You for Everything

I'm sorry mom for all the pain and stress I put you through

I've been to jail to many times, even more then you
And that's a shame because I'm barely 16 and you are 42
So I hope I get out and stay out but I can't do it without you

Everything went crazy when my dad died and shortly after your mom died (grandma)

And it was hard for me to get through but even harder for you

Because you knew them longer and, therefore, better

But we both had love for them like nothing ever

And all that we've been through

You were my mom and best friend the only one I could trust and be loyal to

But if I lost you I wouldn't know what to do

Except what you instructed me to do

And it would seem that I was a lost cause but I thank you for taken care of me

And when I was young washing my draws

And when you get old I will take care of you and wash your draws

There's only one thing left to say

"I love you mom."

- Li'l' Al, Alameda

From The Beat: You have been through some tough times in your life lately and it seems that you need your mom now more than ever. Getting out of the system and staying out is of the utmost importance. Try and use this determination to figure out how you can learn from your past and not end up back in the halls once again, so you can help your mom and help yourself. This is an extremely poignant and touching piece. Keep writing.

My ABCs

An assertion associating alternating ambition, bacteria bombarding belief of baptism, catastrophic collision, clean-cut Cadillacs causing claustrophobic competition, current debates deceiving decent decisions/ demonic Democrats disapproving equality especially energizing enlightenment of evident envious, facing followers fearful for forevermore flounder, focus fools-go get gratification! Gratify ghetto gentrification grouse, gun shots guiding guppies' habits, hostile homicides honorable hoodlums are hacking, illustrating intimidation immoral impaction, I'm implying important instinct instructions, irritated inevitable irregular junctions, juke box joyfully joking about jurisdictional justice, ka-ching, knights killing, knuckleheads kneeling, loss lives literally lavishing, laughing lifestyle low riders levitating and landing, long lasting mac-able mentality, Mafioso murderers marching mannerly, mislead misfits motivated notoriously, nonentity nacs nominating noisily, night-life necessities nonsense nose bleeds, obtruding officially, obscene obituary, often ominously, OG's organized orderly, playa's propaganda provoking police patrol, personally perturb people poppin' Patron, possessed quickness quickly quenched a quote, recent recklessness reportedly represented recoil, retaliation resuming rivalry, ready to rumble, San Jose's soil supporting significant statistics, too true to the trickery tomorrows top thizz, telling u ur usage is unavoidable urgent, ungovernable violence, voluntarily voices verifying vicious virtuosity, wicked ways working with world war weaponry, wakes wrinkled xeric youngster zombies!

-Smiley, Santa Clara

The Beat Within: Smiley, we've been sitting on some of these gems for a minute but this one is especially amazing. No matter what your inspiration, you have the talent to be a real writer. Don't stop, won't stop.

I'm Willing

I am going to write about how I am willing to change my life if this is all there is to life. Going to jail, shooting, selling drugs. I will change my life because I have seen through my experiences and other people's. It is tiring to have to sit on a corner all day night having to watch out for the police.

And, it gets irritating knowing that there's somebody out there that wants to kill you or rob you. That's why half of the people I know, are forced to carry guns for self defense. It's hard to live a life like that, trying your hardest to do the right thing and go to school but people talk, aggravate and provoke you to do something of the menacing type. And that will start the process of my trying to do the right thing all over.

- T-J, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a well-written and perceptive piece. People can easily get trapped in this lifestyle on the streets. Once you need to carry around a gun just to protect yourself, how can you get into a place where you no longer need this gun? It's a puzzle that you need to figure out, because like you said, going to jail, shooting, and selling drugs isn't the life you should have to live. Think about what you can do to change your life. It will take a lot of work, but keep writing, because writing about your situation can often help you understand it better.

My Life

Time's passing by,

My childhood's coming to an end

Four months and I'll be 18

I'm kind of scared for what's to be

I've messed up a lot

Made plenty of mistakes

Been to juvy one too many times, I think

I'm an addict who lives on the streets

Hoping every night I find a place for me to sleep

I sit here and cry and people wonder why

I have no more chances; this is my last shot

No more coming to juvy or playing the judge

No more acting a fool and being a kid

I need to get straight an' live life for me

Other wise I will not be free

I'm in a whole new ball game

And to be real it scares me

Because that whole being in the tents thing just isn't me

This life I've been living is all I've ever known

And now it's time for me to give it all up

Let it be in the past

Become the person I know I can be

I know I can do it if I really put my mind to it

Just got to remember one day at a time

I used to sit back get messed up and laugh

That's all my life was about day after day

Now I'm almost an adult and I'm so very confused

Staying sober's going to be the hardest thing that I do

I can do it with some help, I know I can

To all the teens out there stay up and change your life now

'Cause trust me when I say

You don't want to be feeling the way I do now.

-Jessica, Durango, Maricopa County

From the Beat: The longer you wait to make changes in your life, the harder it becomes. We make changes because what we have been doing is no longer working out so well for us. Once you become an adult, things don't automatically change. The age of 18 is not a magic number. The warnings and consequences you are given as a juvenile are to help you so your life will be better as an adult. However, if you don't heed those warnings, you will continue to struggle throughout your adult life. Don't wait until the last minute to make changes or it may be too late!

My Life And Heroin

This is about my life; I want to say all the things that I shouldn't have seen as a kid.

Ya, I have to admit it did hurt seeing my mom using heroin everyday, that's her day to day life, practically my whole family use heroin. Half the people where I'm from also use heroin and all you would see is many people who use heroin.

When I was young I would turn my back and see my mom trying to shoot up on her leg and poking herself everywhere trying to get that rush one more time.

See, she's been using for about 18 years, I should say every time my mom would get locked up and I would talk to her on the phone she would tell me, "I promise my baby I'm gonna get clean and I'm gonna be there for you.", but I knew that was bull.

My mom was pregnant with my one year old little brother. When my mom was pregnant with my little brother she was using heroin, and when he was born he was addicted to heroin. They put my mom and my brother in this six month program. My mom completed it, so we all stayed together with a friend. Then my mom asked her friend if she could watch us for a while. My mom went somewhere and the cops saw her and she got arrested. Her friend called CYFD and they took my little brother away and when his social worker told me he got taken away, I just cried so hard. Just to hear that my brother got taken away because of my mom. I was so hurt and pissed off at her that I don't really speak to her anymore.

She still uses heroin and cocaine. I'm from Chimayo and for short we call it Chima. It's up north and everybody uses heroin.

Every summer when people go clean the ditches they find needles, and spoons. Everyday homies are scared about what's go'na happen, they watch for narcs or cops and when they see one, they warn all the dealers or drug addicts that have warrants. They can stash their stuff or tell the people who have warrants to hide. We'll that's all I have to say.

Ashley, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: This must have been a hard life to live. Now the best thing to do is learn from your experience, and grow do better with the knowledge you now have.

Eat Some Soup With Your Mama

It's hot right now. Feds got my phone tapped. Can you hear me now? Can you hear me now?

Now what's up with The Beat? Same ol', same ol'. I just wanna talk about these hard-ass wannabes. People in here be talkin' hella loud about the next ninja, like others can't hear them. I think people be so soft, they wanna start beef and click up with some otha-ass ninjas that they don't even know.

I think we should just drop the beef if we so spooked, to just do what we gotta do. Please, for me and for yo' moms and pops and whoever else care for you. Nah, for real, it's '08 and time to get out the beef, or whatever you call this nonsense you getting yourself into and yo' homies is dyin' for.

So all ninjas talkin' out, do me a favor... Go eat some soup wit' cha mama and them.

I'm out. Young Mula.

-Young Mula, San Francisco

From The Beat: What excellent advice! We know from experience that these words will fall on mostly deaf ears, but someone may read them and see how important and serious they are. How 'bout you? What are your plans for when you get out of here? What are you going to stop doing to avoid coming back? What are you going to start doing to create a better future for yourself?

Dreaming Of The Marines

I've always wanted to go in the service and show people, let alone, the world to see the person I really am.

I face hardcore difficulties and struggles, addictions and pain. I'm an alcoholic from hell, a clucker for crack and heroin in the midnight hours. A constant jail bird, in and out, in and out of jail. It's pretty crazy my life is spinning out of control right before my eyes. I am getting used to everything going downhill and just going to hell in a hand basket.

The dreams I've had of becoming a Marine have really giving me a lot of hope, but damn man! I'm so strung out on the street dope! I've become weaker and weaker as the months go by, all I want to do now is go on another mission for my next high.

I watch the commercials of the Army and the Marines, and it makes me feel good inside but I know I'm stuck here. I'm stuck here, there, everywhere, and trouble follows me. I don't look for it, it loves me. He-he-he-he.

There are drugs and gangs in the military, and it would probably be the same as the streets, but we'll be in uniforms. That's another thing, but there's nothing wrong with trying, huhuh? That's later in my life.

Right now I have enough pressure and trouble on me. One day, one day I'll be on the commercials and the pamphlets! A beautiful Navajo girl smiling, waving at the cameras with family shouting, people shedding tears of joy, and kids running up o me yelling and laughing. Me, holding my child in one arm and a bouquet of roses in the other...man...I hope dreams do come true....

-Tweety, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: You stated that, "trouble follows me" and that you "don't look for it". If that was true, why would you "go on another mission for your next high" and be out "in the midnight hours"? It seems that you look for the alcohol and drugs on your own. We suggest you quit pointing the finger and own up to your actions. That's what a marine would do.

My Proudest Accomplishment

I don't know if it's my proudest accomplishment, but I am proud that I got my GED because I never used to go to school. I used to act like I was going to school to my mom, but on my way I would go with my friends and go smoke weed or something. But I also would have to help my mom with my little sister.

But I did decide I wasn't gonna all the way drop out, so I went and got my GED. I'm also proud because I think I do a cool job at helping my mom with my little sister taking her to school and help watching her.

-Burk, San Francisco

From The Beat: You have good reasons to be proud of yourself. We think you should have stayed in school, but we're proud of you for doing the next best thing. Your mom and sister must be proud of that accomplishment, too. Now, what are you going to do with it?

I Saw My Son

I saw my son first roll over

I saw my son first say "goo"o

I saw my son just smile

I saw my son first crawl

I saw my son's first steps

I saw my son say "mom" and "no"

Now I'm in jail

I see no more

- Michelle, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: Life is all about choices. You are old enough to know right from wrong. The question now is, what's more important: your son or the party life? The choice is yours.

Mis Pensamientos De La Vida

Como la palabra misma dice. ¿Cuántas veces nos hemos disculpado a la vida? Son incontables por los actos que hacemos y por lo que decimos. ¿Cuántas veces no le hemos pedido perdón a nuestras madre, y a nuestro Dios? Esto es cosa que siempre va a pasar en el recorrido de nuestras vida.

Yo pienso que la vida solo es una y no creo cambiar mi manera de pensar. En mí, esto es lo que quiero hacer. Cada día surge un pensamiento diferente que el que teníamos y tratas de mejorarlo. En resumen, la vida hay que vivirla un día a la vez y hay que disfrutarlo a lo máximo.

Seguro, hay cosas que nos da pena y otras que no hacen sentir orgulloso. Lo que me hace sentir bien fue el recorrido por la primaria y secundaria de mi educación. Siempre estuve entre los mejores y eso me hacía sentir bien. Como en ese momento de mi vida tomo de ejemplo que en los siguientes etapas de mi vida, voy a hacer capaz de hacer las cosas igual o mejor.

From The Beat: Si quieres hacer una mayor vida, todo depende de como decidas vivir tu vida desde hoy en adelante ¿Como piensas vivir tu vida? Se nota que has sido educado, y lo podemos ver a través de la forma como escribes y como te expresas. También se nota que has gozado la escuela. A lo mejor naciste para ser un gran profesional. No dejes que esta experiencia y otra cosa te quite la oportunidad de ser un buen ejemplo.

My Thoughts About Life

The words speak by themselves. How many times have we asked to be excuse from life? They are uncountable because of the actions we make and what we say. How many times have we asked for forgiveness to our mothers and our God? This will always happen in the journey of our lives.

I think life is only one and I won't change the way I think about it. For me, this is what I want to be. Every single day, a different thought comes to mind than the one we hard and we try to make it better. In conclusion, we have to live life day by day, and try to enjoy it to the max.

Surely, there are things that make us feel embarrassed, and others proud. What makes me feel good was throughout middle and high school of my education. I was always between the best ones and that would make me feel good. I take those moments as an exaple to do be the same or better in the next phases of my life.

-Mario, San Francisco

From The Beat: If you want to make a better life, depends on how you decide to live your life from today and on. So, how are you going to live it? It's noticeable that you got some education and we can see it through the way you write and express yourself. You also have enjoyed school. Maybe you were born to become a professional person. Don't let this experience or anything else take away the opportunity of becoming a good example.

We have to give an interesting place for life. We have to appreciate it, we have to gain first place in life and get a better opportunity in this world.

Saying I'm Sorry

I will say sorry to the person I took his life. I never thought I would of shoot my best friend. I never meant that to happen. If I could take all that back I will because I never knew the gun was loaded.

I want to tell his family that I'm really sorry for shooting they son because I was on drugs and thought it was funny playing with a gun. Until this day I'm still hurting from what happened that day. I never thought I would be doing nine years for killing my best friend.

I just want to say I'm so sorry for what happened that night. If I could, I will take it all back. I hope when we see each other in heaven I can tell you how I feel. So with that I will let you go because it starting to hurt me just thinking about it. So with that I love you bro'. RIP my best friend.

-Lil' Slick, Alameda

From The Beat: This story is just heartbreaking. We are so sorry that you have had this experience, and we hear how strongly you wish you could turn back the clocks and do it over differently. Losing a friend is bad enough, but knowing that you are responsible is even more horrible. This is one of the risks of having guns in your life, or having guns in a family home. We hope that you are talking with a spiritual advisor (preacher, for instance) or therapist, someone you trust, because nobody should have to carry something like this alone.

La Vida

Muchos de nosotros no tenemos en cuenta lo que significa la palabra vida por el desorden que tenemos en nuestras vidas.

Un ejemplo es cuando andamos en las maras, asesinamos a otras personas que no tienen la culpa de nada. Le quitamos la vida inocentemente.

Hay que darle un puesto muy interezante a la vida. Hay que aprecialra, hay que ganarse el primer lugar de la vida y tener una buena oportunidad en este mundo. Un buen ejemplo es buscan las cosas de Dios, no andar en pandillas, respetar a nuestros padres, y asi formar una familia sana.

Gracias a Dios por ser felices sin problemas. Sin embargo la felicidad la alcanzamos en esta tierra y con nuestro Dios en el paraíso.

From The Beat: Tienes mucha razón. Muchos se dejan llebar por la presión de otras malas influencias y terminan lastimando a otras personas, a ellos mismos y hasta a su familia. Tienes buenos consejos en como vivir una vida sana y llena de cosas positivas, esperamos que apliques estas formas de vivir mejor en tu vida y que llegues a disfrutar tu vida de una manera como la que describistes. ¿Qué te inspiró a escribir esto? ¿Qué te abrió los ojos?

Life

Many of us don't know the meaning of what the word "life" means because of the mess we have in our lives.

One example would be when we are into gangs, we kill other people who don't have nothing to do with us. And we take away the life of innocents.

We have to give an interesting place for life. We have to appreciate it, we have to gain first place in life and get a better opportunity in this world. For example, to look for God, not to be in gangs, respect our parents, and form a safe family.

Thank God for being happy without problems. However we reach happiness in Earth and in God's paradise.

-Danilo, San Francisco

From The Beat: You're right! Many young people are ran by bad influence preasure, and they end up hurting their loved ones and themselves. You have given us a great advice about how to live a healthy and positive life. We just hope you apply the same advice to your life and end up enjoying your life the same way you described it on this piece of paper. What inspired you to write this? What opened your eyes?

Possibility

People able to stay together forever
Obstacles to overcome without fear
Saving love for the true one
Situations that help one another overcome fear
Impartial to people you love and dislike
Believing without doubt
Important things for good reasons
Loyal to those you love and hate
Intellectual decisions
Time used for things with good reasoning
You respect your time being young

-Jordan, Durango, Maricopa County

From The Beat: You have very eloquently described the positive outcomes of making wise choices. Your life truly is full of possibilities and we hope you change your life so you can realize them to the fullest. This time spent here allows you the opportunity to ponder which direction to take. We wonder what direction you will choose.

I Saw

Man, it's crazy. Ya really want to know what I saw? Then, I saw people get shot at, people getting killed, dropping dead. Man, it's crazy. I also then seen people get they ass beat an' have to go to the hospital. I then seen people get robbed.

Man, I then seen hella shhh... beezies get put on the stroll by the big homies. Man, I then saw dope fiends hitting they pipes. The marks jacking people, man. But that's the type of shhh you see in the 'hood.

I'm used to it now, but I just hope my lil' ones don't have to go through the same shhh an' see the same shhh that I then seen. I just hope they don't get trapped in the system, 'cause it's a trap. All you do is steal drugs, smoke drugs, an' get caught with drugs, an' that's all that people see nowadays.

But to all, keep ya heads up.

-Bri, San Francisco

From The Beat: What do you mean you're "used to it now?" We sure hope not; no one should ever get used to the things you describe here. But we think we know what you mean, which is that it doesn't affect you the same way it used to. What do you plan to do personally to keep your "lil' ones" from going through what you're going through? If you continue to be a "soldier" for your turf, you can be SURE that those little ones will simply follow what they see. Are you ready to be responsible for their actions?

Drug Free And Proud

What I would really be proud of... When I get out, I hope I can start drug free for at least until 2009. I want my THC level to be at zero, but right now it's at 800.

The reason I would be proud of that is because it's not just me that wants me to be drug free, it's really most of my loved ones.

Ever since I started doing drugs, my life started going down the drain. I mean, everything turned backwards. I started losing my grades, and that made me not able to play any of the most favorite sports I like to play. And plus, I had no wind for it.

But the cold part about it was that I knew it was damaging my body. I tried to stop every day, but the drugs would not let me.

Also I would be proud of when I get out just to get money.

-Lais, San Francisco

From The Beat: Thank you for being so honest. When you say that you tried to stop but the drug would not let you, it's a disease that you are describing. And, like all illnesses, you need help to control it. You have already taken the first and hardest step (in a life-long journey), which is to admit you have a problem, and want it to stop being a problem. When you get out of here, you will have built up days or weeks of sobriety, which is a good foundation for success in an AA (or similar) program on the outs, and that's what you'll need for success in your life. Good writing!

When It's Nothing To Eat in the House

The best mistake I ever made was coming to jail. Coming to jail made me see and realize what was happening on the outs at home. My mom has six kids she takes care of by herself and now I see why it's so hard on her.

By me doing the stuff I did on the outs it made it harder for her, and now that that I'm here I make it harder on her. Being in jail helped me see why my mom was trying to save money for rent and food. Now I see why my oldest brother is the way he is, doing what he needs to do to help himself and not wait for my mom to give to him, but him doing what he do make it harder for my mom. Me growing up without a dad make me kinda mad, knowing if I had one around it would be a lot easier for me and my family. And then the only time he come around is to try to get with my mom and not get with the family.

What even makes me madder is when she keeps talking to him off and on and we go through the same shhh every time. I got a little brother who I love a lot, so when he tells me he's hungry and it's nothing to eat in the house, that makes me want to rob and kill to feed my little brother and sisters. That's probably why my oldest brother is how he is.

Being in jail helped me build up a better relationship and a better understanding with God. I thank god every morning I wake up and ask him to watch over and take care of my family wile I'm in here. My plans for when I get out is to get a job and help take care of my family.

-John, Alameda

From The Beat: You're right - coming to jail might have been your best mistake, if it has taught you to live by the wisdom you show hear... The most important way to take care of your loved ones is to stay free for them, so you can continue to support the family, and lead by example.

A River That Flows Forever

As long as some suffer
The river flows forever
As long as there is pain
The river flows forever
As strong as a smile can be
The river will flow forever
And as long as you are with me
We'll ride the river together
For mother

-Damani, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a different kind of piece for you Damani, we really like it. It's short and sweet, gets your point out there. Thanks for sharing this one.

That Night

The memory of that night cuts my dreams like a shard of glass.
All time stood still. At least it felt that way, standing there, staring at the work of a sick brain, wondering if the years past had done it, or if a secret never to be revealed was the source. I couldn't pull my eyes away. They were transfixed on the shadowy figure swaying in the breeze. Why, I asked. Why does pain make us do such things? Will I end up like this - hanging from timber and saying goodbye to life as I know it?

-Jon, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: It's very difficult to enter the mind of another. It's hard enough to understand our own mind. That was a hard thing to see, to come upon. You wouldn't be human if a sight like that didn't send your mind racing in many directions. We know you pretty well Jon. We think you'd seek help before you traveled too far down the road of despair. By the way - good writing.

Synthetic Fun

I got lost in that world,
 The one they said would be fun
 It was fun for a while
 Then she saw it as a problem
 But of course I didn't
 I was introduced to a solution
 I didn't want it
 Soon everything they started to say
 Came true.
 Jails, institutions, and death
 Is what they told me
 Jails — check
 Institutions — check
 All I got next is death
 I've been through...
 Who hasn't?
 Going back to those moments
 When the "fun" took control
 When he touched me a little too much
 Even when I said, "Stop!"
 When I broke his heart
 When I couldn't say stop
 When it got so bad
 I'd do anything for it,
 Like never say, "Stop"
 It got so complicated
 When it was supposed to be so simple
 Today I sit here
 Twenty-four days without that synthetic fun
 But still I cry
 I cry for my mom to hold me
 But she never comes
 I guess that's how she felt
 When I was playing with that fun
 Now that solution is what I want
 So I can say, "Stop!"
 So I can say, "NO!"
 So I can hold my mom

-Sophia, San Francisco

From The Beat: We don't know what particular "synthetic fun" you're describing, but in the end, it really doesn't matter. The temporary "fun" effects of all of them soon disappear in a trail of disappointments, depression, dishonesty, and dire consequences. You already know all this, of course, so now comes the hard part — applying what you know to your own life. As you make clear, the warmth drugs provide soon becomes cold; the warmth your mother's arms provide lasts forever.

Why Not Try Somethin' New?

Why not try somethin' new?
 Everything I tried so far landed me in here with you
 I'm grown now a ninja—made eighteen today
 I'm glad I'm seeing another birthday, but not this way
 If you didn't try something new, bet you comin' right back
 While everybody else kickin' back countin' them stacks
 Better get yo' mind right. Me, I'm already knowin'
 Forget the streets, legit money is the best thang goin'
 I know, you thinking, "Why, ninja I'm just gon' die.
 Why not ride?" I'm not expected to live past twenty-five.
 Because, its getting' ugly, this lifestyle comin' to an end
 Don't believe me, go on head and learn the hard way then.

-Young MarkieBo, Alameda

From The Beat: This piece is crackin. Great work. Your flow is great, your images are vivid and make pictures in our minds as we read. Your rhymes are unexpected and interesting, and you use humor in a delightful way. We appreciate the way you are thinking. You are setting out to do a hard, but very important thing. You are so clear now as you are looking at the "lifestyle" from inside the hall. We'd like to know what's gonna help you keep to your determination when you on the outs and facing the temptation of all those "stacks"? Do you have support people who are not in the life?

Saying I'm Sorry

There's a lot of things that I've done that's wrong. A lot of times I wish I get to apologize. Sometimes I do, sometimes I didn't.

The last time I said I was sorry to is my mom. I'm sorry for what I've put her through. I'm sorry that I put her through even more stress this time I got locked up. I have apologized to most of the people close to me and some of the people I know. I feel that I need to apologize some more to the people in my life.

A lot of people has apologized to me before. I'm happy they did, and I usually am a forgiving person.

I would like to apologize to my mom and dad. I know being locked up and failing in school really hurts their heart. And for that I am sorry.

-Ramon, San Francisco

From The Beat: What hurts your mom and dad is knowing how much you are capable of achieving, and how much they love you and hate to see you hurting. So, you are right to apologize to them, but more than that, you owe yourself an apology. You, too, know what you are capable of doing, and you fell short of your own expectations. Now is the time to turn it all around. Now is the time to move on and become the man your parents raised.

Life

What do I live for?
 I really don't know.
 Sometimes I feel like I shouldn't be here.
 It's like I don't have a purpose in life.
 I don't have anything to do in the world.
 I might as well just die right now,
 but I don't want to die.
 I think I'm scared of death, but what for?
 It's natural.
 Everybody will try it one day, but why do we have to die?
 Why can't people live forever?
 I guess we will never find out until THE END!!!

-Boo Nasty, Alameda

From The Beat: Most people are afraid of death. It is wired into us to try to stay alive. And yet it sounds like you are feeling a little lost. Well, sitting in the lock-up as long as you have, we could understand you feeling a bit directionless. Do you have any goals or dreams for life once you get out? That can help give a person direction. Not having dreams, or not knowing how you are possibly going to change your life when you been doing the same thing for so long, man, that can make a person feel like they don't have direction. Talking with an adult who you trust could be helpful.

I Saw

I saw my mother getting a beating by my father. My mom was telling him to stop.

He never stopped, he just hit her more and more. I was so scared that I thought my dad was going to kill my mother. She was bleeding from her head.

My mom was sent to the hospital. She got out the hospital three days later and she got all her stuff.

After that happen my mom got a call from some police officer. They told her that they found my father dead in his house with a gun wound to the head. They call it suicide and that was the craziest thing I ever saw.

-Li'l Slick, Alameda

From The Beat: This sounds like a terrifying incident—witnessing all this, thinking your mom was going to get killed, and not being able to stop your father's rage. Then him killing himself...Losing a parent, no matter how messed up they are, can be a big loss and leave a person with a lot of questions. You came into this world with some big challenges to deal with, even before you got put in the hall. If you have not already, it is so important that you get some support. You cannot control what you got born into, but you are the one who is steering your own course now. It's up to you to decide how to make the most of your life and get to work on it.

A Tough Lesson Learned

One day when I was about seven years old I went to a park down the street, and there was a black car in the parking lot. The windows were knocked out, so I looked in to the car and saw that no one was looking at me. I started to bust up the car a little more, breaking headlights, tail light, and the windshield, then I got into the car and saw a picture of a lady. When I looked at the picture she looked sad, and I felt bad about what I just did so I decided to go home.

When I got home my dad looked mad, real mad, he grabbed me with anger and took me to the back of the house and stripped me naked and whipped me with a cord to my back and face.

The neighbor showed up in her car and told my dad to stop, and he went into the house and grabbed his gun. He ran out screaming at the lady pointing the gun to her face, I was scared and the fact I was naked made me even more reason to be scared.

The cop's came a few minutes later, and they questioned my dad and put him in cuffs. I started to cry because I didn't want him to go to jail. I didn't know what I was going to do, but they took him to jail. That was a lesson learned, to never do anything I am not supposed to do.

- Masino, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: It's a bit confusing on how your father found out about what you did to the car? Unless you told him, or as the saying goes "karma" It's a good thing the neighbor came over to stop him, because who knows just how things may have turned out.

Alone

Since I've been in jail
I feel alone more than ever
I never thought I would get caught
I thought I was too smart
Too clever
Why do I do what I do?
I thought I would never know
Until it finally hit me
The friends have got to go
I feel helpless and alone
Whenever I'm in my cell
While others
Are laughing joyfully
They enjoy being in hell
I miss my family dearly
But my freedom even more
Thinking my family resents me
My heart's ripped in tore
I find my only joy
Throwing my feelings on a page
Instead of lashing out at others
In a devious evil rage
My mother can't save me here
Here the government holds the thrown
I'm in a room full of human beings
But I still feel I'malone!

-Robert, Durango, Maricopa County

From The Beat: Loneliness and separation from those we love is the price we must pay for making bad choices. We usually make the choices we make because it's what we want at the time. We wonder if you will take the time next time to think beyond the moment? We hope this has taught you to be wiser next time and choose to do right. Either way, we hope you continue to write.

I Saw Me...

I saw me in ten years
if I continue to go down
this road, there will be
no Lataezia
I saw a young scared teen
living the life of the streets
runnin' from the police
I saw a pretty young lady turn
into this person that wasn't me
I saw me in somebody else's shoes
I saw me with kids and no job
trying to make ends meet

But then again
I saw myself in ten years
Finished school and got
a college degree with my
own house and car
I saw me and not nobody
I saw the real Lataezia
Not a Juvenile Hall
delinquent.

-Lady Tae, Alameda

From The Beat: We picture you at a crossroads in your life, and your poem shows us how it feels to be you, looking down two roads. We're not gonna lie... both roads can be difficult, but your wisdom and your determination will support each step you take towards the positive future you envision and which you deserve. Thanks for sharing your beautiful words.

Keep Holding On

My life is a cycle-of-money-problems, and death,
Tryin' to a keep my head up, but it keeps falling on the
desk.
Thinking 'bout all the potnas I lost and 'bout the people
that's suppose to be yo ninjas, but ain't really.
Yo' ninjas they smile in yo' face but talk behind yo'
back.
I'm tired of ninjas acting like we cool.
I'm tired of this life, someday I'm getting' out of this
game,
I'm too young to be in and out of jail, sittin' in a cell,
stressin like hell.
But I'm a "G" just waitin' to get out, I'm fo' sure gon'
make a change.
Just 'cause you get a job don't make you no sucka.
Ain't no money in the streets no more anyway.
Wise ninjas know you can't be in this game yo' whole
life
'cause you either gon' be in jail or dead and I want to live
my life as long as I can.
If I die, ninjas ain't gon' do shhh to help my mom.
They might wear my hoody,
though, let's be real, yo' ninjas ain't loyal,
only person who loyal to me is my mom.
That's why I'm gon' try to better myself
'cause I'm smarter than this,
being told when I can do everything, you know what I
mean.

To all keep yo' head up, knock yo' time out.
That's all I gotta say 'till next week. Peace.

-Damani, Alameda

From The Beat: It's a tough cycle to break out of, but it's something that you know you need to do for your mom, and also for yourself. You know you don't want to be in jail, all you gotta do is take that next step to make sure you don't come back. You have the desire, the next step is action. We hope we can be a part of this big change in yo' life.

Remember Me

Remember me, perhaps I was blind to the facts, stabbed in the back. I couldn't trust my own ninjas, just a bunch of dirty cats.

Will I succeed, paranoid from the weed, hocus pocus try to focus, but I can't see in my mind a blind man doin' time. Look to my future 'cause my past is behind me.

Is it a crime to fight for what is mine everybody dying tell me what's the use in trying? I've been trapped since birth cautious 'cause I'm cursed.

Fantasized of my family in the hearse, and they say it's the white man I should fear, but it's my own kind doing, all the killing out here.

I can't lie, it aint no love for the other side, jealousy inside makin' 'em wish I die and my Lord tells me what I'm livin' for, everybody's dropping, got me knocking on heaven's door.

So many enemies dreamed of killing me, if these the killing fields then I'm the growing seed.

All my memories. seeing brothers bleed, and everybody grieves but still nobody sees. Recollect your thought, don't get caught up in the mix, 'cause it's a cold world filled with a lot of tricks.

Rest in peace Marcellus Haley.

-Damani, Alameda

From The Beat: Another great piece Damani. You've got some good rhymes going on, and some great thoughts. What's so great about your writing is the heart behind it. You have such a talent for getting your feelings and thoughts down into words on paper. Keep it up man.

Recollect your thought, don't get caught up in the mix, 'cause it's a cold world filled with a lot of tricks.

Faith

People always give up when they are in a serious situation and think that there's no way out. They sometimes say, "Forget it! I don't give a damn where they send me or whatever they do to me!" They're so quick to lose their faith in themselves.

When you lose faith things will never come out the way you want them to, and you will make decisions that couldn't really be the best ones. Keep your faith up and keep thinking positive, and positive things will come your way even if you're guilty or not.

-Rebellious One, San Francisco

From The Beat: We don't see why you call yourself "rebellious". This piece reveals such a forward-looking attitude — which is part of faith in the future. It puts you in such a better mental place, which gives you a freedom to think of possibilities for your life that may be entirely new. We'd love to know what you're rebelling against, but in the meantime, keep thinking.

My Mistake/Faith

A thing that was a mistake I made was the fact I could never help but to hurt my loved ones. I would use drugs, ignore them, use profanity and never even cared about how they felt.

I had more than enough time to think behind these walls and realized that what the hell I was doing was immature and unforgettable. I managed to prove that I'm a better person but, for sure, I'm gonna change my criminal act and live the legal and happy life that I wanted. My faith lies on the decisions I make, which will affect people the positive way

-Luis, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is a great piece because it's all about having faith in yourself, which can sometimes be the hardest thing to do. Good luck and stay positive.

Heroin

I saw people go down, down on heroin.

I saw my dad and it wasn't a good thing. He was messing around with the wrong connect, and he got caught up into stupid stuff. He got shot on his neck and got paralyzed on his right arm and now he can't do anything.

I'm telling you, don't go down on stuff like that because the first blast you take will mess you up, and get you hooked on that crap, quick, and not only that, but you lose your life and everything you've got.

-Daisy, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: You are right Daisy, doing heroin or other drugs will only ruin your life in the end. Follow your own path - make the right choice so you can succeed in life.

Saying I'm Sorry

If I was going to apologize to anybody, it would be my mom for real, because she raised me better. If I'm in here, I know she can't be proud of me. She wanted me to stay in school and be a hoop star, but that wasn't where my heart was at.

I wanted to live my life in the fast lane, so I dropped out and started doing my own thing. I didn't want to ask mom for money, so I did what I had to do to get my own money. And it broke mom's heart to see me thugging. That's the only one I owe an apologize to.

-Cal, San Francisco

From The Beat: She may be the only one you owe an apology, but that's no small thing! If you did apologize to your mom, sincerely, that would mean that you would do whatever you needed to mend her heart. And since you know what broke it, you also know what is needed to mend it. That would be an act of true love.

Using Time So It Don't Use Me

Yeah, what's up? From just being here I just felt different like other ninjas that got to look at walls. When I'm in my room, I read and then when I want go to sleep, I got to look right at a wall.

When you at home, ninja, you might want to get a little snack, but you can't just come in here and ask for a snack. You got to wait hours.

So when I do get out on the outside, my life gone change. Not my whole life, but most of it. So every night I just got to pray to god for thanks and to help me out in this spot. But I want to thank y'all for coming here to hear me speak my feeling about things. One love.

-Lil' James, San Francisco

From The Beat: It's very encouraging to read that you want to make some major changes so that you won't have to come back to a place like this. That shows real maturity on your part. Can you write about the specific changes you hope to bring about in your life? What are you planning to do differently? What are you planning to stop doing?

Coming Back

When I came to YGC, I was like, "Am I ever going to get out of here?" But I did get out of here. Then came right back here again.

My mom was like, "Do you like coming back here?" Deep down inside, I ask myself, "Do I like coming back here?" I was like, "When I get out, I'm not coming back here," but I came right back like a dumb ass for something I didn't do, but like a man I got over it.

So I ask myself, "Do I like coming here?" No, I don't like coming here, but when I do come, I be mad at myself. I know I can't be mad at no one else but myself because the things I'm doing make me come back here for the bs I'm doing. Then it clicked in my head, "Stop doing what you doing!" That's what I did to stay out of here.

-Young Eddy, San Francisco

From The Beat: But if you stopped doing what you were doing, then how did you end up back in here? Well, whatever the answer is, we hope that something has truly clicked in your head so that you can make this your last lock-up ever! It's not easy to keep your promise ("stop doing what you're doing"), but it's also not easy to keep getting locked up. So now it's time to make that critical decision that you know you have to make. Good luck!

I'm Sorry

Wha'sup, Beat? I say that I apologize to myself, because I neva looked at myself in purple and khaki. I wanna apologize to my mom, because she's hurting, knowin' that I'm sittin' in juvenile hall, hella depressed. I wanna apologize to her for not following my dreams and runnin' into these brick walls.

I owe myself a real big apology for settin' myself up to be a failure. But now I think it's too late to apologize to anyone, because it's my fault. I'm in the predicament I'm in now, but I still apologized out of love.

-Smokey, San Francisco

From the Beat: It's never too late to apologize, Smokey, as long as you mean it. We agree with you that you owe both yourself and your mom and apology. You let yourself and her down. But you have it within your power to change her frown to a smile, and to convert her disappointment (and yours) into pride. Yes, you're in a predicament now, but it's only temporary. You can make the changes you know you should be making, and there's no such thing as "too late to change."

I Pray

When I have a child, I pray they don't ever feel the pain I felt.

I hope the streets don't get the best of my child, boy or girl,

But you never know what can happen in this messed up world.

I seen my ninja killed right in front of my eyes.
 Bullet killed him instantly, never got to say goodbye.
 Gunshot victim won't be my demise

I don't try to act a certain way or put on a disguise.

I don't depend on anyone but myself.

Put too much trust in a ninja and you'll end up in cuffs.

A lot of ninjas be pillow talking afraid to stand up for what they say.

I stand by my word each and every day

I regret a lot of my actions but what's through is through and what's done is done

I'd give anything to start life over and give it another run.

Tryin' to make it to see twenty-one,

But that's a difficult task not everyone can get it done.

-Cree, Alameda

From The Beat: Great poem. It's like a part of you rhymes about wanting things to be different, another part of you feels like "this messed up world" could take you down. You can't start life over, but you can start a new life. What steps would you need to take to accomplish this "difficult task"?

If This Is All There Is...

Well, I hope there is a heaven and a God, but sometimes I doubt it.

I mean, some things we will never understand and one of them is God.

This is a tricky world so many unexplainable things happen everyday.

But who's to say God is making them happen?
 (My Mom would have a heart attack if she heard me saying this!)

I know everyone has wondered when something horrible happens in this horrible world, where was God? Or when something vicious happens to the most saintly person we know... where was God?

Sometimes I wonder how we can live off of a book written by a human being.

If that's the case, why not believe in Cinderella, or Snow White and the Seven Dwarves? I'm not saying I don't believe, and I'm not saying I do.

-Alandra, Alameda

From The Beat: We completely respect the fact that you are asking the big questions about life and God. You are part of a long line of people, going all the way back to ancient times, who have dared to question the "dominant paradigm" (the beliefs that the majority of people hold). Asking these questions is nothing to be ashamed of. Through questioning we learn more, and sometimes marvel at life's mysteries.

Changing My Life

I just want to say that I want to change my life and live a better life, quit smoking weed and quit drinking alcohol and all those bad things I used to do. I want to forget all the badness. Go to school and from school to college and from college to having a good job like a lawyer or a sheriff, something that gives me enough for my family to give and for me and to eat and pay my rent and enough for going to have fun like going somewhere I haven't been at, like another country or state.

I want to visit the world with my family and take a lot of care of my mom because I love my mom and she loves me a lot, too. She has taken care of me, and I'ma take care of her a lot too. I love my mom with all my heart and not let nothing happen to her at all

-Geordi Tooth, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope you follow through on what you've written here. Getting an education is the foundation of everything else. If you do that, you'll make your mom very proud of you, and you'll have a skill that will allow you to live in freedom. Those are worthy goals!

The Pains Of Life

I think that not feeling remorse for any of my previous crimes hurt the most.

I mean, when I finally realized that I had no regret whatsoever about my past, it hit me.

It made me wonder what kind of person I was.

It made me ask myself "what kind of person can rob somebody and not feel bad?"

When I came to this realization I actually felt bad, not for the crimes, but for not having feelings for them.

-J, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: What an interesting piece. Here's our take: Feeling has to start somewhere. If you feel bad about not feeling bad, consider it an opening into a part of yourself that, over the years, you've closed down. Open the door, bit by bit. You may sense that it's "dangerous" to feel, that's it's safer to shut down your emotions. It's true that feeling something deeply carries with it the possibility of emotional pain, but that's the price we pay for all the privileges of being human. You are a fine writer. We'd love you to make a project of describing what it's like to gradually reawaken to the world of emotion and deep feeling.

My Gift From God

I had cried so many times
My eyes had dropped a lot of tears
They had run down my pale face
Thinking of you just brings me stress
My life is like a test
Where every day I try my best
To this world I'm only a mess
In my jail cell trapped like an animal
I live today with no pain. What is next?
Just don't know...

Not knowing how are you doing has transformed another tear. I miss your lil' hands, your smile and your beautiful face. You are a blessing god sent me to take care of. And for you I'ma give my best.

The point is that I hella love you my lil' one, and that I always will. You are only one year old, and I been away from home for ten months. I can't take no more. I want you by my side. I want to confide to you how much you mean to me and how much I love. You my lil' one. Daddy miss you.

-D, San Francisco

From The Beat: Jail is always a pain, but it must be so much worse to leave a newborn baby behind. Like you, we hope this is the last time the system separates you from your child. To prevent that from happening must be your goal, and is within your power and control.

What I've Been Thinking

What's good with you Beat? It's your boy JT in here. Man. I'm waiting for my PO to let me know what he going to do with me. But yeah. I'm about to do my time and go back to my family and my wifey. I got a good girl waiting foe me when I go home.

This time when I come home, I ain't going to mess up because you're only going to get two thing out of it. You're going to be dead or in jail, and I don't want either. I don't want my grandma to bury me.

Once I get out of here, I'm going to finish school and do what I got to do, because the things that I'm doing ain't even cool for me. But yeah, I'm out.

-Jt, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope you keep the promises you make here because the world is not designed for your grandma to be burying you. It's designed for you to outlive her by 60 years! You owe yourself (and your family) those extra sixty years, so do what you know you have to do, and stay out of places like this!

Finding A Way Out Of The Trap

Wha's up with The Beat? This young Dre Boe. I wanna write about being trapped. We all feel trapped sometimes, you know. But when you're trapped, what makes you different is if you fight to find a way out or you stay trapped and give up like a punk.

I'ma find my way out. My real ninjas know what I mean, ya dig. For example, those people you see beggin' you fo' money so they can get high are trapped. They been trapped for so long that they gave up on findin' a way out, ya know.

That ain't me. I'm stronger than that. Till next time.

-Dre Boe, San Francisco

From The Beat: We like that you are not willing to accept the trap you're in, but are going to "find your way out." We hate it when we read a piece by a young person who has accepted jail or prison (or death) as his fate, rather than doing what is needed to avoid it. On the other hand, we worry when we read that your "real ninjas know what you mean." That suggests you're not willing to talk about your plan, which makes us worry that it may only put you deeper in the hole and into a tighter box. As you plan your way out, don't put yourself back in...

Please Forgive Me

What's up with The Beat? I'm finsta talk to y'all about saying I'm sorry. I just want to say I'm sorry to my mother because she brought me in this world, and she take so much shhh from me. I put her through so much stress, and yet she still be here by my side, through thick and thin.

My mother is my father, too. I'm sorry for not calling you when I'm out, and you worried. I'm sorry for keep coming back and forth into the halls. I'm sorry you go through so much for me, and yet I take it for granted.

I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Please forgive me.

-Unsigned, San Francisco

From The Beat: If you read other writers, you'll see that some thinking saying you're sorry is some kind of weakness. We think it's a strength. Of course she will forgive you. That's what makes being a mother the hardest job in the world. You were once part of her body and will always be part of her heart. Now it's your turn to be by her side, where you belong.



Light At The End Of The Tunnel

'S'up with The Beat? Same thing different day, huh. Anyways, same here. I'm happy as hell because it's July 1st and my last day is August 28th. Damn! That's right around the corner. Time is still going by hella slow.

I'm lightweight nervous because I've been locked up for so long, and hey going to throw me back on the streets. Things are going to be different as hell.

But so what! That's life! I really don't have much to say to you guys, so till then, keep it smooth and I'll write next week.

-Eb, San Francisco

From The Beat: As we've said before, we'd be a lot more worried about your future if you were not nervous. It's healthy and mature to face an unknown future with a few butterflies in your stomach, because the streets haven't changed much since you got locked up, which means it's up to you to change your own act if you want to stay free. We know you can do that, but only you know if you will do that. We're pulling for you.

My Thoughts Like a Tornado in My Head

Bein' in my room laying down on my hard ass bed
 I be thinking so hard it feel like it's a tornado in my head.
 Every time I talk to my bras they telling me how they missin' me.
 I really hope my past won't rule my soon-to-be destiny
 Free all my family that's locked up in this bootsie hall
 I can feel everybody's pain when I put my ear to the wall
 At night it gets so quiet I can hear the time tick.
 All I got is time thinking about it make me sick.
 We wake up and go to sleep with the same staff speech.
 What's funny is that I remember it 'cause it's the same
 every week.

-Young Art, Alameda

From The Beat: These rhymes are like a tornado in the head too, like a force of nature. Maybe they will be strong enough to help you break out of the mental lockdown of daily routines in the hall. Keep rhyming!

Why do I think I'm hard?

Why do I think it's cool to act hard?
 Knowing damn well I'm not.
 Why do I act hard to get noticed by my peep's
 that really aren't there?
 Acting hard isn't gonna get me anywhere,
 just here in BCJDC.
 Why do I think it's cool to run the streets?
 Why do I think it's cool to hurt and disrespect my mom?
 Why do I think acting cool and hard is gonna get me
 somewhere I don't want to be at.
 Acting cool is gonna get me killed or something worse.
 I think it's time for a change,
 and I think it's time to step up
 and tell my peep's to step back.
 It's time to start showing my mom
 I really care and have a lot of respect for her.
 It's time for me
 to stay out of trouble and stay out of the D-home.
 I need to quit
 acting hard and step up to the base and show everyone
 who I really am and make a big change.
 My mom is always telling me
 I'm a beautiful and smart girl,
 but I'm attached to my peep's and running the streets.
 People say I'm never going to change,
 I'm always going to be the same.
 I'm ready to change, and I don't want to be the same.
 I'm ready for the change
 because I'm a big sister and I'm a role model for her
 and I don't want her to be doing the things I'm doing.
 I want her to look up at me
 as someone that's going to be there for her.
 I also want to change because I'm hurting my mom,
 and she's the only one I got by my side to support me
 through all the rough times.
 I'm tired of hurting her
 because I love her to death and I never want to lose her.
 I know I have it in me to change.
 I just don't know how to start.
 I want to do good
 and be the person people want to know
 and show them I can do it.
 People see me as a person that has no potential,
 people judge me before they know me.
 It hurts me to hear what people think of me,
 they all think I'm a bad person.

-Demitria, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: If you continue acting hard and disrespecting the ones you love, it will only hurt you in the end. Before you can change for someone you have to change for yourself.

Mi Partida

En una celda oscura y fría
 Me siento a escribirte esto que
 Siento en mi alma y corazón
 Mi corazón se rompe a pedazos
 Y extraña una caricia de alguien con amor.
 Cada día que entra el sol,
 Ilumina mi corazón
 Pero se marchita porque no hay amor.
 Cada día que entra la luna
 se apaga la luz de mi alma
 y se me va la esperanza
 día a día pienso en que está triste ella
 por mi partida
 y sabe que nunca voy a regresar
 yo digo que todo va a pasar
 y nos vamos a juntar
 pero creo que esto ya nunca va a pasar.

From The Beat: Triste poema. ¿Por qué tienes que partir? ¿Que impide que esten juntos? ¿Tu situación?

My Departure

In a dark and cold cell
 I sit to write this
 I feel in my soul and heart
 My heart breaks into pieces
 And it misses the caress from someone with love
 Every single day the sun's light enters
 It illuminates my heart
 But it wilts away because of the lack of love
 Every time the moons appears
 The light of my soul turns off
 And my hopes go away
 Day by day I think how she might be sad
 Because of my departure
 And she knows that I will never come back
 I say that everything will go by
 And we are going to re-unite
 But I think this will never happen.

-Lil' Snoopy, San Francisco

From The Beat: Such a sad poem. Why do you have to depart? What prevents you from being together? Your current situation? What's your plan to reconnect?

Streets Of Gold

What's up Beat?

I dig this topic because I got homies that's gone but never forgotten. Me personally, if it ain't no heaven or hell, ninjas still going to do the same thing. When you in the streets and deep in the beef, you don't think about dying.

But the way people always talk about going to heaven — how they commercialize it by saying streets of gold and other things — of course people want to go there when they gone.

But hey, "This beef is thick; casualties of war every day." So if you ain't trying to die, stay away... A.N.T.O and the homies gone be back soon! A.N.T.O coming to a 'hood near you. We still out here. You feel me!

-Anto, San Francisco

From The Beat: It's true that religions always try to make the "next" life seem like paradise, whether it's streets paved with gold or 27 virgins waiting. But whether those promises are true or false, it's what you do here on earth that will shape your future. We can see the struggle you're having within your own excellent mind: you want your revenge according to the code of the streets, but your intelligence tells you that going there could lead to consequences that will put permanent tears in your mother's eyes, and leave you enslaved behind cold walls. Choose wisely...

Started Off

Started off as a little kid loving the set. Little knuckle head.

I let my anger get the best.

Loved the way people showed us respect.

Caught up in a net of violence.

Mother at home waiting for me,

calling me, asking me: "mijo, are you all right? Do you need a ride?"

I would come home bloody from a gangster fight.

Mother telling us we ain't right.

Why do we live this kind of life?

I cast tears into an ocean filled with pain.

Now all I can do is pray.

-Young Sinner, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: That's how it was. It can be different. You are a good writer. Let your imagination and your dreams for a better future pour out of a pen. What would you do, if you had the chance? What good things would you do? Dare to put them down on paper. Dare to think about how it might be. That's the first step....

My Proudest Accomplishment

My proudest accomplishment for me was to graduate from High School and get my High School Diploma. That's my proudest accomplishment because it's going to help me in the long run. It makes me feel good 'cause I'm in jail, but I've achieved my goal.

Now it's time to make a new one, plus I made the people that's close to me and my family happy. So I'm happy.

I saw big stacks of money before. I was able to get out there and get it. So when I got to the age where I can get out there on me own and get it, I was so used to seeing it, I wanted it in my pockets. So I got out there and got it a couple of times, but it did backfire into a gun play, fighting, or me coming to jail. But I still got it.

-Lee Dough, San Francisco

From The Beat: We like the first part of this piece so much more than the second part. Getting your high school diploma is an accomplishment that tells you that you don't have to get your money illegally, risking your life and your freedom. You have what it takes to do it legit. We hope you use what you have to do just that.

Saying I'm Sorry

To hell with saying "I'm sorry." At least say, "I apologize," because nobody supposed to be sorry. I can't remember the last time I told anybody "I'm sorry." I ain't no sorry ninja. If somebody said they heard me say "I'm sorry," they lying.

Ain't nothing wrong with saying, "I apologize." That just sounds better than saying, "I'm sorry." Forget being sorry!

But yeah, when I get out, I ain't coming back. Forget jail! I don't see how you clown-ass ninjas get out and come right back in like two months. I been in here for seven months, and I stay seeing clown-ass ninjas keep coming back, like this a club or something. Ninjas must not like havin' sex or something, or don't like being with the fam.

Man, ninjas is stupid! 'Ey, yo, stop coming to this hole! I know one thing, when I do get out, I would die before I come in here again, and that's real. I really ain't coming to nobody else jail. I'm out.

-Dangerous, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope this is a promise you can — and do — keep. It's interesting that "being sorry" is a negative thing to you. We don't see it that way. To us, being willing to apologize is the same thing. As for those who keep coming back, it hurts. Don't focus on them; keep your eyes on the prize.

Saying "I'm Sorry"

What's up, Beat? This Lil' Bri, an' I just got off that nice DRB (room time) for fighting. But you know how that turf shhh go, ya dig?

But, man, this topic that I'm writing about really caught my eye... saying "I'm sorry." Man, it's funny, 'cause I never told nobody I'm sorry, an' ain't nobody even told me they're sorry. But I always tell people, "My bad," instead of saying, "I'm sorry." An' the reason why I say "sorry" is not in my vocabulary is because, when I was younger, an' all the trifling shhh happen, and when I got raped, those people ain't never told me they're sorry. It's funny, 'cause I don't believe them. That's why I laugh when people say they sorry.

But the other day, my mom told me that she was sorry for me having to raise up the way I did, an' I think she really meant it from the bottom of her heart. That's why I love her. But I should be up out here real soon, sometime this week. But I'm gone.

To all my goons, can't keep a soldier down for long.

-Bri, San Francisco

From The Beat: Actually, we don't dig that turf shhh, as you call it. We think going to war (going to fists) for a piece of turf puts your priorities upside down. The turf doesn't care about you, doesn't know you exist, doesn't know anything at all. It's just dirt. We also don't really see the difference between saying you're sorry or saying "my bad." It's not the words that count, it's the sincerity (or lack of) behind those words. If you're seriously sorry, like your mom expressed to you, then saying you're sorry means a lot. If it's just words, well, then, it's just words. (And just one more reality check; you're wrong if you think they "can't keep a soldier down for long." There are more than 200 juvenile "soldiers" in California serving a sentence of "Life In Prison Without Parole.")

Why I'm Changing

They call me Sleepy, I'm from Florida. I came here to California like a month ago because I wanted to leave all my past behind.

My life has been real messed up. I got jumped into a gang when I was 12 years of age. I started going to middle school and my life started changing little by little. At seventh grade I started skipping school and doing loads of stuff. I started smoking weed almost every day and from that time my poor mom started suffering from me. She used to stay up all night waiting for me and also she would cry too a lot for me.

And then at age 15 I was an eighth grader and I started going to clubs, drinking, smoking and just chilling with my homeboys. And then one night me and my homies were in an alley like 20 people and suddenly a car showed up out of nowhere and started shooting at us. Fortunately no one got hurt. That night I got really scared, but not even that stopped me from coming out at night.

I still kept doing the same stuff and still kept hurting my poor mom. Sometimes I felt lonely and sad because I grew up with out no dad. Also when I got to high school I started messing up more and more until I got kicked out of school at tenth grade and then they didn't accept me. But the weird thing about it was that I was a star soccer player my freshman year. I made it to varsity. Also I came here to leave all that behind. I want to change my whole life around and go back to school and go back to school and go for my dreams. I been through a lot of shhh.

Also I want to say sorry to my mom for everything I've done to her. That's why I'm changing and also because I'm here. But I'm happy 'cause I'm getting out of here and cause I got a baby on the way.

-Sleepy, Alameda

From The Beat: You really break down both the pain and the triumph of your past life. Think how great it would be, in a few years when your baby is old enough, to show him or her how to kick a soccer ball around the field. Maybe if you hold that image in your head, it will be easier to avoid your old habits.

Apologize

I say I'm sorry when I'm wrong about something.

I don't say sorry for nothing.

I say I'm sorry when I hurt somebody or hurt em by what I do.

Mama I'm sorry for hurting you.

May God give me another opportunity to say sorry.

-Mackin' Nam

From The Beat: Sorry we had to cut your RIPs, but we've had problems in the past and can't publish them (ask your facilitator, she'll tell you). When you ask God for another opportunity to say you are sorry, do you mean you want the chance to see your mother and express how sorry you are? We can tell how regretful you are for the choices you've made. What can you do in the future to avoid the need to apologize about something this upsetting to your mom?

My Accomplishments

My proudest accomplishment is making a beautiful healthy daughter. Because I've brung life into this world that gives me a better reason or another reason to live. I know that I have to succeed in life for my daughter as well as myself. Another accomplishment is graduating from 8th grade and walking across a stage.

-G-Weeze

From The Beat: Even though you may not have intended to have a daughter at first, it is a wonderful thing to feel pride in the life you've brought into the world and to try to do right by her. Someone you love and who will rely on you can be a great reason to turn your life around. What is your plan to help you succeed in life?

What To Write About?

I really don't know

Normally I can think of something.

But today there's nothing, sorry.

But I do love one thing.

I love my mom.

I love my dad.

There's nothing I wouldn't do for you

I love you little sis

You will never know how proud I am of you

For being such a great sister

I love you all.

Don't you ever doubt that.

-Sunshine Dylan

From The Beat: For someone who didn't know what to write about, you sure did deliver. When you think about it, what's more important in life than the people you love, and letting you know you love them, the way you did here?

My Bad

There are a lot of ways now to say sorry to a person. I say sorry to my lady by taking her flowers and taking her out on a date.

To my friends, I just say sorry and maybe owning them a favor one time.

To my mother, I tell her I'm sorry for what I did, and do a lot more chores around the house.

I ask God to forgive me for my sins of what I have done wrong.

To my PO I just say, "my bad I was just senseless."

To the people that care about me that are around me, it's really hard to say sorry, because it's embarrassing for what I did, so it's kind of hard for me to say sorry.

-Danny

From The Beat: Have you ever said, "I'm sorry" to yourself, for putting yourself in the situation you are? Saying, "I'm sorry" isn't enough, but it helps. Besides saying two words, it would make it much better if you show you are sorry with actions.

Saying I'm Sorry

What's up with it? My name is William.

Damn, I hurt so many people feelings, made them cry. I made their lives hard and I didn't care. They tried to keep me on the right path but I ignored them and didn't care.

Now I'm in Juvy, and damn, I say to myself: "Why was I like that to them all they was trying to do is help me?"

This is for my beautiful mom and dad and the rest of my family. I messed up and I ain't writing this just 'cause I'm in here. I would really wanna let them know that I'm sorry... damn, even to my little brother. I was messed up to him. If only I could have the chance to be out again and show my brother the good way to life, so he won't follow my foot steps.

My mom said that he said the he's going to be like me to come keep me company. My brother is only six years old man. I wanna get out fast and before he really grows up and does something stupid like me. Well I just wanna tell him even though I didn't show him that I'm sorry.

-William

From The Beat: It's never too late to start living a life you can be proud of. We can feel how much you and your family love each other from what you write. Good luck and remember your promise to teach your brother a better way to be!

About My Mom

Well what's up with it Beat? Well today I'm not feeling your topics so I'm gonna write about my mom.

I love my mom more than my dad but I still love my dad though. I love my mom more because she always tells me her problems and I tell her my problems.

She always gave me advice, but I was a hardheaded boy she told me that if I got locked up she works... but I understand that, because she got my sisters and brothers to feed and a roof to keep them under. I love my mom because when my dad was locked up she took care of me and my sisters... that's why I love my mom.

-Arabe

From The Beat: Your mom must be a strong and hard-working woman to hold the family together under so much stress. Do you feel like you have inherited some of her strength of character too?

Dear Mama

Dear Mama I know I put you thru hell and worried you to death by goin' to jail.

Mama I'm gone change my life and when I come home you have a better life.

Mama if I can give you the earth and take away all the pain and everything that hurts.

Mama I'm gone love you forever and any way it go we gone always stay together.

Mama I want to stay strong and know one day that I'm gonna come home.

Mama!

-Jamarco

From The Beat: This piece really moved us. We were really able to feel your desire to do things differently and to make things easier on your mom, and we felt your love and appreciation for her. So the hard thing will be how to hold onto this feeling, carry it with you when you on the outs, so in those tough moments when you gotta say "no" to doing the same stuff you were doing before, you find the strength to go from wanting things to change to BEING the change.

I Saw ...

I saw me and my goons
Smokin' trees and poppin' E.
Actin' a donkey in the streets
Wildin' out and we playin' for keeps
So tear it off when you see me creep
for all my fallin soldiers RIP.

-Chippa

From The Beat: First, sorry we had to cut the specific names and some lines in your piece. Remember we are guest of the system. We can feel how much you enjoyed these kinds of times with your homies and how much you're itching to get back on the outs. You want out so bad, we hope you not going to do something to get you put right back in. At least we hope your freedom is that important to you.

Sorry To My Love Ones, Others, Tough Shhh!

Even though I'm wrong I'm still not going to apologize to you especially if you're not someone close to me. But if you're someone I'm close to like a cousin or my mom, basically I looked up to you as a role model. Of course I'm going to apologize, especially if I know I'm wrong. It's going to be on my conscience, like why would you say or do something like that?

-G-Weeze

From The Beat: Sounds like you might feel that apologizing makes you look weak. We believe that saying sorry also does something positive for the person who apologizes. What do you think about that?

Heavenly Paradise

I believe that all my ninjas that's dead and gone are in gangsta's paradise where they don't have no worries in the world. They don't have to worry about problems—none of that. They have everlasting money everlasting ladies and also everlasting life. Also all my dead goons are together in gangsta paradise.

-G-Weeze

From The Beat: This is a nice thing to imagine. A place and time when people don't have to struggle. Even if you can't bring back your dead goons, is there any place in this world where you feel your worries lifted, even if for a moment? At the movies, with your grandma, or anywhere else?

Free

I would like to accomplish getting out of here.
And be at home with my daughter and spend time with her.
Do more positive things than what I was doing when I was out.
I would like to get a job when I get out here and the future.

-Marcellous

From The Beat: These are great goals! Now, what's your plan to get there? We can imagine getting a job would help keep you on the right path. How will you look for a job? What kind of work interests you? And what other types of positive things do you want to get involved with? Church? Sports? Volunteering? Finally, what is the hardest thing you will face and how will you have the strength to keep to your path?

We Ride For Each Other

My family is like a second God, 'cause we ride for each other and we love each other. My family is the most important thing in my life 'cause I love them and I'm gonna always love them and show them I care.

For them family is a real good thing.

-Family Man

From The Beat: Can you break down some specific things you and your family do for each other, to help each other succeed and stay positive?

Saying I'm Sorry

I would say sorry to the person I robbed. The reason I'm sorry is because I know I scared that person, and if I was to see that person I would tell them sorry for what I did.

I would also like to say sorry to god for doing what I did to get in here. And I know that god was mad that I did that because I'm a church boy, and I know I should not be doing that.

I want to say sorry to god for robbin' somebody and want him to forgive me.

-James

From The Beat: Sounds like you are genuinely apologetic for what you did. Even though you can't take back what you did, are there things you can do to make amends? How do you think you might help others make better choices so they won't end up in the same situation you are in?

My Head Stay Confused

Been to jail eight times it took that long to learn my lessons,
Now I stay in my room reading The Bible and askin' the Lord
for a blessin',

Yeah I try so hard but I continue to keep stressin',
Starin' out the window as these walls keep a ninja guessin',

It be so hard 'cause my head stay confused,
It's like a game I'm playin' but I never win I always lose,
The judge and the DA keep tryin' to make me cut my hair,

But I'm still in the hood mind so I continue to act like I don't care,
Been in here five months but it feel like five years,

Put the mask on my face 'cause in jail you can't show no fear.

-Doug E Fresh

From The Beat: Another great poem that shows the two directions you get pulled in. For yourself, for your children, and for what you believe in, keep fighting and don't give up.

Opening My Eyes

My proudest accomplishment is finally taking life seriously.

It's amazing when you've done wrong all your life and didn't really notice you were in the wrong.
That alone is a blessing and I thank God for opening my eyes.

-Lil' New Orleans

From The Beat: Good for you for taking life seriously. Keep our eyes open and keep your steps moving in the right direction no matter what tries to knock you off course (it won't be easy). Start noticing others who are doing the "right" things who can inspire you and help you stay strong. Small acts of integrity, honesty,, checking with your hear and "doing the right thing" all offer practice opportunities to prepare for the bigger, harder things.

This Is Whack

I swear juvenile hall hella whack can I get a witness,
Staring at these same walls. I know I ain't gone miss this.
Waking up at seven in the morning to eat some nasty food,
Scrubbing the next main toilet and walls I swear this shhh is rude.
Go to sleep in the light no darkness up in here, staff acting hard but I can still smell the fear.
When I get released I ain't coming back, Believe me when I say it this hall shhhh is whack.

-Lil' Teddy

From The Beat: No coming back, not just to the Hall, but to the system. After you serve out your time, you can put all this behind you - if you take the right steps now. What are those steps?

My Girl

I miss my girl
I miss her hugs
I miss her kisses
I miss her smile
I miss looking at her
I miss talking to her
Damn I miss her period
Sometimes I wonder if she misses me,
If she still wanna be with me
'Cause honestly I be having weird dreams
And that what got me stressing
Damn I love her so much.

I'm gon' be out soon and I'm goin' to take care of her.
Damn I think 'bout her 24/7.
I just wish she would still want to be with me when I get out.

My name is William.

-William

From The Beat: We turned this into a poem because it felt like one when we were reading it. Missing your girl when you're locked up must be awful. Have you been getting mail from her? Do you think she believes that you will change?

For My Family

What's up Beat? This you boy Twin from this unit. Boy I want to tell you about a story I am going through while I am in the hall. I have a baby-mama named D.

Before I came to the hall the last time I was here, I got her pregnant and now I am in here again. I miss her hell a bad. She tells me about my baby when I am on the phone with her. I start to cry 'cause she starts to cry to me when I'm on the phone with her.

I feel hell a bad for her because she is out there all by herself and I don't like that. My mom and her mom are helping take care of my baby and my baby mama.

I just want to let her know I am here for her and I am always thinking of her everyday and every night.

When I get out this time, baby, I am going to pimp my program, take care of my responsibility and take care of my baby girl, D. I love you baby. See you soon, stick with me 'till the end. We are going to be together forever. Kisses and hugs to you all.

-Twin

From The Beat: Having a baby, being young, and not having the right support is tough, but it sounds like you are both lucky your moms are helping. Now, get up off your butt, and do something positive in your life! Start now by putting a game plan together that will make you feel good and will help you and your family out in the end. Make those plans a reality. Your family is waiting for you at home. Use this as motivation!

Why I'm Here

What's up? This is Cesar.

First of all, it was a nice Sunday morning when my baby momma came to my house to kill the moment.

I had her car keys, so she wouldn't go out and she came in the house saying to give her the keys and threatened me not to go to her house anymore because she threw my clothes away.

I got mad that everything went out bad, like she made a set up and the next thing you know I'm locked up.

Don't trust a female.

-Cesar

From The Beat: If it was her car keys, why didn't you give it to her? It was hers? It's her right to use and take possession of her belongings whenever she wants. Next time, try to prevent another confrontation like this and think before you react. If you had given her keys to her, would you be in this situation?

Time To Go

Its time to go
Time for me to get out and do something big.
Time for me to do something to better myself and my life.
But it's just time for me to get out and do something.

-B-Nasty

From The Beat: See our response to your piece about your birthday! If you can really do what you talk about in this piece, you'll be giving yourself the best birthday present there is: Success and freedom.

Sentencing

Tomorrow is sentencing time and years that I might get is on my mind
if I would've thought this would've been the consequences to trying to shine
I would've found another grind.
But I can't take it back an in a way that's fine
but my heart goes out to the people who suffered when I committed my crime
but I can see now I recognize my mistakes back then I was blind.

-Lil' New Orleans

From The Beat: It's amazing how easy it is to see what you could've done differently after the fact, huh? After you've served your time you'll get the chance to make some different choices next time around.

The Way I Was Raised

I'm too young to do the shhh that I did before
I an't playing ninja, this ain't no damn joke
I was raised by the "G" in this ghetto streets
thinking mom don't trip,
'cause your son ain't had no sleep
always out, never in, tryin' to get the paper
riding up to no good in that stolen scraper
I have been done some shhh that I regret
since I was very young
smoked a blunt and dranked a lil' gin
that shhh ain't so cool when a ninja get so high
do some stuff that I didn't do before
and then wonder why
sometimes I wish that I was back to a lil' kid
I didn't know how to roll some weed or even get lit now I was seventeen turning eighteen in a damn cell
Staff telling me that I don't even care.

-Nacho Cheese

From The Beat: It seems like you have realized what your life has gone through since you were very young. We hope this make you realize your mistakes. What are your plans? Do you plan to continue living the way you were living? It's time for you to strongly consider a possibility of switching your life around. Now is the time.

Graduation

My proudest accomplishment is when I graduate from high school. I always promise my grandparents that I was going to graduate before they left this world.

I got my diploma for myself my grandparents and my parents. Now I'm going to get my master's degree for them. I'm through wit it. Sunnyside.

-Lil' Nef

From The Beat: Good work for following through on your educational dreams! Let your clear intentions carry you through your Bachelor's degree and then your Master's. It is a LOT of work, but also very inspiring as you "feed" your brain with knowledge. You can certainly do much more in this economy with an education, and we know you want to go far and stay legit! What are your next steps once you get out of the hall? Will you enroll in a community college?

Family

Let me tell you a little about myself.

My name is Charles and I'm sixteen years old. I'm in Alameda county juvenile hall. I wanted to tell you a little about my family. Me and my family is tight, and I been away from then for a while now.

Bein' away from my family hurts a lot. And seeing my momma behind that window hurts a lot. And when I'm in my room all I can think about is seeing my family another day, and getting out of Alameda County clothes.

-Charles

From The Beat: A lot of people say it took getting locked up to make them realize how much they loved their family. Is that what happened with you? Do you think you'll be able to change your lifestyle so you can stay with your family?

Deep Thoughts of Pain

Woke up this mornin' in deep thoughts of pain,
Thinkin' of real shhh, like Fat Wayne
Hearin' doors open and hearin' doors close,
Wishin' I was in the hood ridin' on fools
Came up too fast in the hood with the thugs,
We was movin' mad mean not showin' no love.

-Young Purp

From The Beat: All that "movin' mad mean" is part of how you ended up in the system. We know you want to end this pain, but how can you end it if your dreams are still about the violence you got caught up in to begin with?

The Definition of Real

The definition of real to me is being real, dawg. If you a fake you gone get treated like one.

Course if you a real ninja everything about you is real. You can't be in the middle, is either one or the other.

You gotta be about what you be talking about like my ninja Lil' Boosie say. 'Cause some of these ninja's say they know the definition of real, come on dawg you don't know shhh about the definition of real, 'cause I am the definition of real

-Lil' Purp

From The Beat: When we talked with you about this piece in the unit, we asked if it is possible to be real and also positive. You said yes, so now we want examples: A teacher, a particular staff, a family member?

Locked Up – I Just Got To Deal With It

What's up with it Beat this yo' boy B-Nasty. Being locked up is messed up. Man I'm tired of being told when I can eat and when I can shower.

But I guess if I did do what I did I guess I would be at home where I can do what I want to when I want to. But I can't do shhh while I'm in here. But that just something I got to deal with until I leave.

-B-Nasty

From The Beat: The good news is that if being locked up made you appreciate the freedoms you have at home, you might be more focused on keeping those freedoms when you get out, right?

I Adore The World

In my life I like to explore everything I see.

I adore looking at everything -- and I wanting to see more.

I notice, I love, and I adore the world.

-T-Mann

From The Beat: Next time around, step up and tell us a little more about WHAT you adore about the world, give us a little tour of what you want to explore.

What's Your Favorite Game And Why Do You Like It?

My favorite games are shooting games. I say that because that's all I like play when I get time.

I like all games that have some thing to do with killing and wars 'cause a ninja like me don't do shhh but go to war in the hood...

Anyway, I'm out until next time and to every body in here keep ya'll heads up and just do the time... and for the ones that's crying don't do the crime if you can't do the time!!!

-J-Baby

From The Beat: Most soldiers who are off fighting wars, for example in Iraq, would do anything for the way to end because they want to go home. They dream of peace. Do you also wish the "wars" on the streets could end? What would peace look like? What would your life be like if you weren't fighting?

Violence

All I am saying is, I don't know what to believe at times, especially when the crazy unexplained violence is happening in the world so much today.

To innocent people at that. I feel like this is a very good subject to write on because sometimes I wonder myself... is there really a paradise especially for people like me, who just live life and let it carry them on a the rollercoaster rides we ride? Up and down, up and down.

-Alandra

From The Beat: What do you think? Is paradise finding peace in life here on earth, or is it the afterlife? What do you picture paradise to be like? We think that you have every right to be there, no matter how you define it.

I'm Happy

Something I'm talking about is why I'm so happy. I'm so happy because I been here for two years and I'm finally getting out.

I kind of feel like they might light watch work me, because they putting me on EM, but it's good at least I'm going.

I'm also happy because I'm 'bout to be with my family and ninjas.

-Get Happy

From The Beat: Are you ready for this program? You've already spent a lot of time in here, so it's time for you to start living a real life in the community. There's one thing that worries us and that is that you are still thinking in being with your ninjas. They are going to get you into trouble again if you hang with them. We guarantee that!

Faith

Having faith is what gets me through everyday. Believing in God, praying is what keeps me going everyday. I pray and pray to God hoping for me to get out. Hoping to get good news when I go to court.

Having faith is what lets me sleep at night with all the streets on my chest. Having faith is what is going to get me out of here, 'cause they dropped my charges. God answered to my prayers.

How... 'cause I had faith in God and never gave up on Him or me.

-Ismael

From The Beat: We are so glad that you have such strong faith. It will take a lot of effort to change your life once you do get out, and having a spiritual belief to help keep yourself going is just like eating good food, except it's your soul that your faith is nourishing. We strongly believe that God helps those who help themselves as well, because with your actions you have the chance to show God and yourself the direction you want to move.

The Lock Of Mail

I'm hella mad 'cause I haven't got any mail in a good two weeks. It's grimy how they hold mail from you.

I'm supposed to get a letter from this girlie but, I don't even know what's going on.

Mail can really boost your mood. It's good, though I don't pay it too much attention.

-Codi

From The Beat: If you don't pay much attention, why are you tripping about it? And if you don't get mail don't blame the system, take a look at YOU!

My Dreams

When I get out, I'm going to change. This jail life is not for me, twice was enough.

I'm going to change. I'm gone to get a summer job, work hard for my money. I'm gone to go to school, pass all my classes, and get a job.

I want to be a firefighter. I always wanted to be a firefighter when I was younger. I don't know why. I just always had a thing to be a firefighter. I always wanted to work on all the calls, if someone's been hurt or if it's just one of those regular fires or a big one.

I heard that they get paid good money for doing the job they do.

If I can't be a firefighter, I want to be a police officer, work for NASA, Air Force, or work at Juvenile Hall as a counselor, so I can talk to the youth and tell them the mistakes I made and the mistakes they don't need to make.

-Andre

From The Beat: You are on the right track. You are definitely using your time in a positive way, by thinking what's best for you and your future. You have good and positive ideas and careers in your mind. Make at least one a reality. Whatever you choose to become, you will get paid well, and will have good benefits plans for you and your future family. One day at a time. Get in school!

It's Not Enough

Some times saying "I'm sorry" ain't enough. You hurt people real bad that sometimes they don't want to forgive you. So you got to deal with it. I am sorry is not enough that's all.

-Sponge Bob

From The Beat: Have you ever found yourself in a position where you felt truly sorry, but the people you'd hurt just weren't trying to forgive you? Or was it the other way around, where you got hurt so bad you didn't feel like you could forgive?

If There Were No Heaven Or Hell

What if there was no heaven or hell? If there was no heaven or hell, I would live my life to the fullest.

Everyday of my life, I would live it like my best. I really wouldn't care about what's right and what's wrong. I would just be me. I wouldn't have a second thought about nothing. I would try to do just about everything a human can do in this lifetime.

On the other hand, if there really is a heaven and a hall, I just don't know I would really change my ways, and start trying to live my life right so that I can have my future afterlife set aside with a secure future. I would do everything in my power to make sure I live right.

-F-T

From The Beat: Imagine if there were no heaven or hell and all people would think the way you do. We wouldn't exist. Would we? How would this world look like? You can live a life to the fullest without doing wrong. Do you know that?

Never Saying "I'm Sorry" – I Apologize

I've never been sorry for anything I've done in my life, because I'm not a sorry person. I have apologized for a lot of wrongdoing that I have done. I've apologized to myself for being as hard as I am. I've apologized to my mother for not being the daughter she wanted me to be, and I've apologized to my grandmother for leaving her side when I knew she needed me to be there for her. I still apologize. I love you with all my heart!! And I mean that.

-Danniqua

From The Beat: Wait, we're confused! You start by saying you've never been sorry for anything you've done in your life, but then you say that you sincerely apologize to your grandmother. Are you saying that there is a difference between being sorry and apologizing? We'd like to read more about the difference, in your opinion.

Prayer

I'm tired of the life I lead

I've tried to change

But I can't succeed

I'm tryin' to get rid of my inner demon

But he's made it clear

That he ain't leavin'.

He's tryin' to prove

That he's stronger than me

By taking over my body

And letting me free

He's been with me

All life long

He's grown up with me

And has gotten strong

He's the reason

Why I act a fool

He's to blame

For the wrong I do

Demon showed me

How to have real fun

He taught me how to shoot

and gave me a gun.

Every night I get on my knees

And pray

That He [God] will make this

demon go away

He gets stronger by the hour

But now he's quickly losin'

All his power

'Cause God is here

To save me

And give me back the life

That heaven gave me.

-La Guera

From The Beat: We all have demons to fight, but ultimately you are responsible for your own actions and choices.

Apology Letter

I wrote my mom an apology letter telling her how sorry I am for making her cry and hurting her feelings when I am mad. Because when I get mad, sometimes I say things that I don't mean to say. Stupid, mean things that later on I regret and I wish I would've thought twice before opening my mouth and saying the things I said to her.

-Ana

From The Beat: We can relate, and it seems like just about everybody has said mean things that they later regret to the people they are closest to. We feel bad and guilty when the moment passes. Next time one of these blow-ups is about to happen, can you take a big breath and check in with yourself? Try to cool off in the moment?

When I Get Out

When I get out of this place I want to do good. They tryna send me to a group home but it's all good I'm gonna pimp that shhh. I want to get out and be with ma baby mama and get out to be with my son.

- Rick

From The Beat: Those are big reasons to want to get out. We hope you stick to your program, work it out, so you can stay out and be there for your family. We want you to do good too.

Saying Sorry

Saying "I'm sorry" is one of the hardest things I've had to do. Most people, like me, don't own up to what they do, but right now I'm going to own up. I have done bad things even when I was younger. But the worst things started to come out when I was ten or eleven. I moved to my Dad's.

Living with my dad made me defiant. My dad is a person you don't want to be defiant to, but it's hard not to.

Then, six weeks later, I moved back with my mom and we moved to Texas. That's when I ran away for the first time. I snuck one of my 17 year old runaway friends into my Mom's house in Texas and got caught not sleeping with him but with him in my room.

Then I got really out of control. I started using marijuana.

Then, my mom sent me to my step-mom's house. And I didn't want to live with her because of her kids. I hated them with a fiery passion. So I moved back in with my dad and his new girlfriend. It was all cool until dad got drunk and I said the wrong thing.

-Haley

From The Beat: We hope that you will be kind to yourself, and forgive yourself for some of the "bad things" you may have done. It sounds like you were getting moved around a lot, and this editor remembers from personal experience how much it can mess with a girl's head to get labeled as a troublemaker or a problem child. You were just playing with the difficult hand you were dealt. However, it IS on you to find healthier, more constructive ways of dealing with life situations. Do yourself a favor and try to avoid those fight situations with your dad, but at the same time, remember that he is an adult and responsible for controlling his emotions/behavior.

Saying "I'm Sorry"

Saying "I'm sorry" won't change anything I did

Saying "I'm sorry" won't change the fact that I was just trying to be a kid

Saying "I'm sorry" won't keep me out of jail

Saying "I'm sorry" won't keep me from breaking my father's rules

Saying "I'm sorry" is just a cover up for most people

To me, saying "I'm sorry" is just like any other word in the vocabulary. Saying "I'm sorry" won't change my past.

It won't bring back my childhood

Saying "I'm sorry" won't make my life last.

So saying "I'm sorry" is just a waste of time because you know in the end "sorry" was just to get you out of what

you got yo self in. So until my life ends, I will use the word

"sorry" not even to my friends

-Lady Tae

From The Beat: It's true that "sorry" is just a word, and actions speak louder than words. When someone has done you wrong, but really regrets it, what is something that person can do to regain your trust?

We Taking Over

We living this street life only cause we can.

Them whole Oakland streets we taking over, man.

Deep in this life you get shot you live twice I say.

Believe that, that gives you understanding of myself 'cause hope is a must.

The mob I love so, squad up man 'cause we taking over bra.

Livin' it up we all we got, this life,

I'm a real ninja so you know I got nine lives.

A lot of ya'll sweet like sugar and spice and everything nice

we taking over. Man I want the whole globe life to know before I go.

-Lil' Dirt

From The Beat: As nice of a thought as it is, none of us has nine lives. We get one, and if it ends, there's no coming back. Before you go any farther with this life you're living, you need to be sure that you're ok with the consequences that come with it. You could end up in jail for the rest of your life, or you could end up killed. Are these fates you're willing to accept? If not, you need to make some changes before you go too far. Wake up and use your talent to help you not harm you.

My Proudest Moment

My proudest moment was when I brought my son into this world. I love him so much. I change my life for him, but know I'm in this situation. I could always blame my family, but that wouldn't be a man.

-A proud papa

From The Beat: That is an incredible thing, bringing a child into the world, and something you should definitely be proud of. Even more important than bringing him into the world, you can be there for him as a father, something to be even more proud of. Get busy!

To Live To A Hundred

If I can achieve one accomplishment, I would want to achieve being alive 'till I'm 100 and see all my grandchildren run around, and teach them about life. There is more to life than things that revolve around them.

I don't care for a lot of people that's why I end up here.

I just wish to see my kid and grandchildren not make the same mistake I made. So if I can accomplish one thing, I wish to accomplish to teach my love ones to love others.

-Nguyen

From The Beat: That's beautiful! Do it! What's the first step to teach others to love one another? What do you suggest?

Saying "Im Sorry"

Well, I have just apologized to my mom yesterday. I felt that I needed to because I have left her with the responsibility of taking care of my child when clearly she does not have to, nor is it right, because my daughter is my responsibility. I felt kind of bad because I'm in jail and I know that I should be the one who is taking care of her, not my mom.

I told her that I was sorry and that I also felt bad because I am a mother now and I need to start making better choices before my daughter gets older and tries to start following in my footsteps. That is something that I wouldn't want to see her doing.

-Natasha

From The Beat: It's true that when you become a parent young, you become an adult young. However, you don't have to give up yourself completely. Hopefully, you can find a way to show gratitude to your mom for helping you out and also find ways to start making adult choices that will keep you in your daughter's life as a role model.

Wrote a Letter To My Victim

Last night I just wrote to a lady I robbed last month, and I gave her a front-to-back apology because I knew it was wrong what I did to that lady. I knew she didn't deserve it.

I get mad when I think about [what I did] to her. So that's what led me to apologize to her. It also made me feel good that I wrote the letter because I got it off my chest and I didn't let my pride get in my way.

Man that's probably a good question and I really couldn't tell you if I will be the same or not. I plan on staying in school and graduating. '09 is my year to shine, and that is what I plan on doing when I leave juvenile hall.

-Spongebob

From The Beat: Sounds like you have a burden lifted off you after sending that letter. Now you can hopefully move on towards a more positive time in your life.

Sorry Mom And Dad

I'm sorry to my parents for not staying out of trouble and not making them proud of me. I should have showed them I could have done better in life, instead of being stuck here with a bunch of dudes.

I'm also sorry for having them stress about me all those times I was out and not at home. I'm also sorry to my dad because we were supposed to show my mom we was supposed to be something but I failed him.

-Buenaflor

From The Beat: Now what? You apologize, are you ready to put in work to prove to them and yourself it's more than words? Hope so. What's your plan?

Jail Cells

As I sit here in this jail cell I want to go crazy. No sleep, no time to be me. Jail, Jail -that's all I think about.

As I get into fights, do I want to get out? That's what I need to think about. I saw that what landed me here were my actions. Do I change them or do I let this jail time be the death of me?

As I sit here, the walls feel like they're caving in on me. I feel my heart beat, but as I scream, no one can hear me.

It feels like I let other people see the best of me, 'cause as I scream, they say not a thing. What do I do? I am about to go crazy. Help me, help!

Let me out, 'cause when I leave, I will never come back. I may let them get the best of me, but I will never let them take my pride.

-Tilly

From The Beat: Our hearts go out to you because you were clearly in anguish when you wrote this. Have you met with the mental health professional at the hall? Those folks can really help during a time of crisis. We hope that you will keep writing down your thoughts, and finding ways to soothe yourself during this very stressful time. We care about you, and want you to take care of yourself. Talk to someone you trust!

Lat Week I Apologized

Last time I apologized to someone was last Sunday to my mom for disrespecting her. The last time before I got arrested I didn't see at the time how much I need and love her. And I do think my mom did deserve an apology because I disrespected her even though I loved her.

-Psycho

From The Beat: So what must change in your life? How are you going to put your words into action?

It's Close

What's up Beat? Damn I'm glad the month is over. Now I got one and a half more months and I'm done. I can't wait 'till the day I get out.

First when I get out I'm gonna go try and get my job back and after that, go kick it wit' my potnas fo a min, then call a female up then call it a night.

-Lil' Hs

From The Beat: Sounds like a pretty good plan for your first day out. Do you know what you'll do for a job if you can't get your old one back? Having a plan A is good, having a plan B is even better. You can't always get what you want, so back ups are always good to have, as well as what you plan to do the second day, third, fourth, fifth and so on!

I Saw...

I saw hate

I saw love

I saw gun shots fly by my face

I saw girls naked

I saw trouble all around me

I saw my mom cry

I saw homies die

I saw homies get drunk and high

I saw my life flash between my eyes

-Psycho

From The Beat: And...? All this pain, does it make you question your choices? Hope so.

A Few Words

I'm sorry mom and dad.

-Nateel

From The Beat: That's a start, admitting fault.

RIP Cell

What's up bra how you been in heaven?

How is it up there?

Hopefully one day I can join you in paradise.

Me, I been cool tryin' to stay out of trouble

but you know how it is.

Sometimes I wish you could be here especially for yo' daughter

not even yo' patnas.

But I bet it's better up there than down here.

The squad stop messin' wit each other after you died but yo ninjas still remember you, happy birthday too.

Bra this is short talk because I might be seein' you soon.

Hopefully I get to heaven and we could talk in person or spirit or face to face.

Bra watch over us bra.

luv you bra! See you soon.

-Rony

From The Beat: Why can't you stay out of trouble? Didn't you learn anything from Cell's death? Well, was that for the best that the squad broke up? Sounds like it to us. Then again, you write to Cell like your days are numbered, what's up with this type of thinkin'?

When I Die

When I die I'm going to Thug Mansion but if I don't make it there I don't want to go to hell.

-Lil' Quis

From The Beat: Are Thug Mansion and Hell the only two options? If so, do you think you have some power in deciding where you end up? Our actions and behaviors in life would probably have a big effect on where we end up in the next life, don't you think?

I Saw

I saw violence
I saw kindness
I saw too short
I saw my family
In good and in bad
Either way I love them
just like they love me
And my main girl

I saw a lot of funny stuff in my life
and I saw a lot of violence, bad things
My dream of that
Came true I
Went through a lot
Of good and bad
But I'm still alive
And I thank God
for that 'cause it
wasn't my time to go.

-Lil' C

From The Beat: This is part of life, for better or for worse. What have you learned from what you have seen? WHO is in your corner? How has this made you a better person or made you worse off? Tell us more!

Saying I'm Sorry

The most important person I need to say sorry to is my mama, 'cause all the shhh I done. I never told her I'm sorry for what I did. And I know I hurt her too.

I've been free for two weeks and got down for another robbery. And if this my second robbery case so I know she gone be hurt If I go to the CYA, That's why I want to say sorry mama.

- Lil' Charlie

From The Beat: It is important to remember that your actions don't only affect you—each time you get sent back to juvenile hall, you hurt your mom too. You realize this, and we're sure your apology means a lot to your mom. Send her your love and work hard to get and stay out of here, if not for your sake then for hers.

Sorry, But I'm Not Gonna Change

What's good Beat? It's Dopey. If I was to say sorry to my mom and baby sis' for all the pain I caused them for the life style I live.

My biggest apology is that I am not gonna give up my life style because this is me.

I'm out this daycare in 15 days, back to the hood females and family!

-Dopey

From The Beat: Well, at least you're honest about where you stand... but we'll be sorry too, if you pay for this choice with your freedom or your life. Good luck - we hope you have a change of heart out there.

Forget Fathers Day

What up Beat! I wasn't feeling the topics today so this is my first time writing to The Beat.

My dad was never there or me at any time, wasn't there when I smoked my first blunt, or shot my first gun, or my first figh,t or stole my first car, or when I got stabbed.

All I got to say is screw fathers.

All I'm saying is I am filled with rage, ain't no ninja that can stop me. I am one that will never run. I will bust if I must.

-Shady Rabbit

From The Beat: Control that rage, before it puts a closed lid on you! Seek help before it's too late. We do not need to see you in a worse off position.

My Proudest

My proudest accomplishment was when I graduated junior high school. I was very happy and mad at the same time because my dad didn't make it. The only family member that came with me was my sister and some of my friends. Bye.

-High School Bound

From The Beat: Sounds like you have a pretty close relationship with your sister if she came to see your graduation. We're sorry your dad didn't make it that must've been hard for you. How did it make you feel? Did you talk to him about it afterwards? Congrats on graduating, that's a great accomplishment.

No Paradise

If there was no paradise, shhh, trust me I'll go with Tupac to thug mansion. I don't believe in hell. I'll either go to heaven or thug mansion, not hell. If I knew there was nothing beyond this life it wouldn't change nothing because I'm already changing little by little.

-Psycho

From The Beat: How are you changing? Break it down!

Sorry To My Girl

Babe I'm sorry for not being there for you. I know I messed up in life but forgive me baby. I miss you and I apologize for leavin' you on short notice. I know if I wouldn't have I would not be here. It hurts me to be here and not with you. I think about you every night all the songs that come on the radio.

I think of you. All I do is think of you. I pray for you aren't doing something stupid so you won't end up where I am now. But like I said. I'm sorry for leaving you. Just know that I love you with all my heart. I don't want to lose you for the stupid stuff I'm doing.

- Javi

From The Beat: You have a lot of love for your girl, and your dedication to her shows. It can be hard to rebuild trust and help a relationship grow while you are locked up away from her, but apologizing for messing up is the first step, and we're sure that if you continue to be as genuine and considerate as you are here, you two should be able to work through the hard times. Think about what you can do once you're out to make sure you stay out; getting in trouble again is not worth losing her.

I Miss You Tio

Well shhh I just wanna say rest in peace to my Tio (Uncle). It's been a while since they haven't been out here. Shhh I miss my Tio (Uncle). You're gone but never forgotten. We still got you on our mente(mind), still putting it down for you. May you Rest in Peace.

- Chikillo

From The Beat: Losing loved ones is extremely hard. We know you will keep your tio in your heart as you work your way out of the system.

Apologize

Que Onda (What's up) Beat? The topic for today is saying sorry. The only person I had to say sorry to is to my mom because I hurt her a lot.

She's done hella things for me, but me like always I never listened to her. Only because I like being with my jaina (girl) and homies. My mom is the only one that I ever had said sorry. I love you mom. Well Beat I'm out.

- Chikillo

From The Beat: This is an honest apology, and we are sure your mom appreciates it. Use this opportunity not only to say sorry, but to think about what you can do to treat your mom better in the future. What caused you to hurt her before? How can you avoid these things from now on?

Do You Want To

I used to hop out active with the Mack and bust heads
But I want to change my life because I am tired of all the
bloodshed

I used to think laying dudes down was the only way to
get ahead

Till' I met my Uncle, he showed me if you hustle hard
and stack you could get bread Don't get me wrong if I
got to I still spray the lead

But before I take what another man worked hard for I'll
be dead

God changed me so I know he can change you
The question ain't can you change it's do you want to?

- Greg

From The Beat: The last line of this piece, especially, is extremely insightful. If you want to change your ways, it is important to remember that (even though making changes in your life often turns out to be harder than expected) you are in control. If you really want to change, try not to let anything stop you; you are in the driver's seat. What changes are you choosing to make, specifically? How are you going to make sure that you don't let any external forces get in the way of this determination to change?

Mom

Mom I'm sorry for all the pain I caused you. I'm sorry for keeping you up day and night worried sick about me. I'm sorry for all the times I disrespected you, and called you names. I want you to know I never meant it, one bit.

I'm sorry for not listening to you when I really needed to. I just want you to know you're the only woman that ever meant anything in this world to me. You're my Queen, my savior, and my guider, Queen.

- Sonya

From The Beat: It's obvious that you love your mom very, very much, and we're sure she appreciates this honest and sincere piece. Often, your family members turn out to be your biggest allies, and it is very important to appreciate and respect them because life is much harder without your loved ones by your side. What led you to treat your mom poorly before? What can you do to show more respect and love for her next time you see her?

Sayin "I'm Sorry"

I wanna say "I'm sorry for stealing people's bike's and takin' people's money, and also for stealing from stores and robbin' ninjas. I'm goin' to get my own money." I just want to say I'm sorry.

- Lil' Jordan

From The Beat: We're glad to hear you apologize about all the wrong things you did, but sometimes people say sorry and still go back and keep doing all the wrongs things they were doing. It's easy to keep doing all the bad things you were doing, but it's even harder to try to do the right thing. What's gonna stop you from hurting all these people again?

RIP Homey

What's up my dude, my goon, the Beat well this one's about my homey Skarface. Well me and my homey goes way back. We used to smoke purp, get drunk, put in work, steal cars, and get away in high speeds together.

Well the last time I was here and two days befo' I got out is when he took his life playin' the death game, Russian Roulette. And when I got out I found out. Well I'm out Beat! RIP Skarface. I'll drink two pints of Henn for you

- Chilltels

From The Beat: It sounds like you and Skarface were living extremely recklessly. The loss of your friend is extremely tragic, but we encourage you now to try and learn from his death. Is it wise to try and continue living that lifestyle? You don't want to end up the same way. Use this as a reason and opportunity to reevaluate your life. Be smart, and make better choices than you had in the past.

The Beat In Me!

I'm sorry to all the innocent people I hurt and stole from.
I'm also sorry for publicly humiliating you. I'm sorry for all the times I threatened you for money.

- C

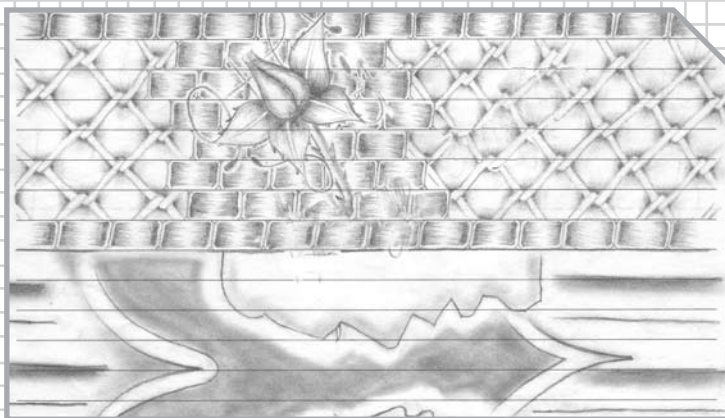
From The Beat: Saying sorry is a simple (and powerful) act that many people forget to do. We're glad that you're thinking of the people you hurt and letting them know you want to apologize. But realizing what you did wrong is only half the battle—how can you ensure you don't hurt them again in the future?

Saying I'm Sorry

Saying I'm sorry is a hard thing for people, but for me it's not. I'm sorry to my mom for me being in the hall for the first time and now she paying restitution for what I did. So I just want to say sorry to my mom and God for what I did.

- Young son

From The Beat: Being able to recognize your faults and apologize for them is a very important skill, and it is great that you are taking the opportunity here to do just that. It seems that you are able to apologize when you need to, but you're right when you say that saying sorry is hard for many people in this world. Why do you think that is? Is it too much pride, or ego? Do people not realize when they are at fault? What keeps people from saying sorry?



I Hate This Place

I hate the food. I hate the system. I hate everything about this place 'cause they say I can't live with my mama.

They told me they gonna place me. My grandma says I can live with her. She'll take me, but they want me to go to a group home so bad, for 6 or 7 months. When I went to court the judge said if I do good in here, I'll probably go home to my grandma.

They say I've been diagnose with ADHD - I'm not sure what it means but they gonna get me some medicine. I am surprised by this, and yeah, it bothers me. My grandma said that too, and that I cannot sit still. They say I need medication to sit still, but I ain't on medication now and I am sitting still. The reason I cannot live with my mama is because she's on drugs. She's been talking about getting off drugs for 2 years.

- Donte

From The Beat: ADHD stands for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. People with ADHD can often be impulsive, hyper, and lose concentration easily, so it can make things like school or testing harder for them. Many kids all over the world are diagnosed with ADHD and do fine, but the medication can be of use if you need help focusing or settling down in certain environments. It is natural to be upset or bothered when you are suddenly diagnosed with a disorder, especially if no one really explains to you what it is. But ADHD does not need to affect your life very much. It is definitely no reason to doubt or feel bad about yourself. About your mom, we are really sorry that you can't live at home. She probably needs time, space, and love to work through the drug problems, and even though you can't live with her, you've got to be there for her—it's obvious that you love her very much.

From Me To You

I done a lot of things to make me proud
 Like eatin' the fishes out the pond
 You get it, from droppin' flies
 From taking the toughest to the weakest
 From taking from somebody
 Who try to take from me
 I'm never slippin'
 All you actions speak louder than words
 And I do a lot of action
 I'm from where
 The young have big breams
 And can't nobody stop them
 Bodies get to droppin'
 And people ask why
 I never ask, because I know
 Make the wrong move
 And that's yo' fault, ya dig?

-Coop

From The Beat: How can it be true that "can't nobody stop them" but "bodies get to droppin'"? Sounds to us like plenty of those young people — including you — are stopped, at least temporarily. If you're never slipping, how'd you get here? An even more important question: How are you going to stay out of here?

I'm Still Here

Hey, Beat Within. I'm still here, going crazy They need to let me go home. I'm 18 now and I'm in here with the lil' ones. I wish they can send me to 850. I miss my Fam Bam and my goons on the outs.

I hate the food here. The school here is weak. I'm in hell. I hate this messed up place. I need to get out before I kill someone.

Well, if you know me, you know I'm crazy, and if you don't know me, now you do. I'm crazy and I do not need no pills at all.

I got shot two times from this thug life. It ain't shhh. My mom was on drugs. The streets is my fam bam and my big homies.

Well, I got raped by my stepdaddy.

To be continued. Until next week.

Love,

-Banana

From The Beat: We can understand, after all that you've been through, why still being here is an accomplishment! These things should not happen to anyone, and certainly not a child. Tragically, we read similar stories every week. But one thing, Banana, if you think you're in hell, you're in for a rude awakening at the next stops along the criminal justice highway. This place is annoying; it's not hell. We can't say the same for what's down the road...

I Don't Get It

What's up with The Beat? Me, same shhh, different toilet, chu feel me? Still in this thang doing my time, not letting it do me. I been in here 102 days.

This shhh so weak. Man, we do the same shhh every day, but yet I can't seem to stay out. I don't get it. I guess it's my dedication to the streets, or just that I don't care.

-Doddie

From The Beat: We wonder if that second attitude — "I don't care" — leads to your dedication to the streets. Is there anything besides the streets that you dream of? Do you ever allow yourself to imagine being in an entirely different setting, like a college campus for example?

Saying I'm Sorry

A lot of people wish they can take back a lot of things, but when it happens, it ain't no takin' it back. "Sorry" can help sometimes, but not all the time. Sometimes you do all you can, sometimes you don't do enough. But, me, I do all I can, but don't beg on my knees. If you can't forgive me, then stay mad at an OG, then forget it.

-Fee G

From The Beat: We agree that it's better not to do the things you later have to say "sorry" for. But we also think that saying sorry helps both the person saying it and the person hearing it.

What Are You About?

What's up with The Beat? It ya boy Lano.

What I want to talk about this week is my image, how I act when I first meet a ninja. First I'm going to ask him what is he about and what he trying to do in life. If the ninja really trying to do something, like for example, try to get a job so he can have his own shhh, you feel me, or taking care of his family, I could mess with 'em.

But if a ninja on some bullshhh, like rep the 'jets, that cool and the whole shhh, but if he ain't trying to do shhh else I wont mess with 'em.

-Lano

From The Beat: It sounds like you're interested in people who think and have plans for a better future. What are you trying to do in life, and what are you about?

My Feet Is Clean

What it do? What it be? What it be?

I rock Akademics and LRG

Forces and Js only touch my feet

So if you ain't, you should dress like me

My name is Lil' Tone and you know how I be

I stay with fly gear and my feet is clean

And you know I'm in the halls

But that's just me.

You know I'm a G

That's right

-Tony

From The Beat: So, would you rather have clean feet in the halls, or dirty feet on the outs? Cleanliness may be next to godliness, as the saying goes, but freedom beats it by a mile!

Lonely

Do you know what it feels to be lonely? Have you ever experienced loneliness? Look at me... Me, I neva get visits. Me, I gets phones calls, but they neva answer the phone. How that make me feel? Man, it make me feel hurt that nobody loves me. I kinda do think my mom do, but in my heart, if she love me, show me, tell me, then I wouldn't feel lonely.

-Adrianna

From The Beat: We agree with you, Adrianna. In fact, we think your advice applies to everyone all the time: if you love someone, especially a family member, tell them, show them. Loneliness is a terrible feeling, so we hope when you get out of here you never have to come back!

Shot In The Neck

I am chillin'

Having fun at home

A gun goes off

And killing my brother

He was playing with the trigger

Of the gun

-K Money

From The Beat: Statistics tell us that guns people have for their own protection often get used in ways that only hurt them more. Children don't understand how deadly they are, or how permanent death is. We are sorry about your brother's accident. Does it change your attitude about guns?

Saying Sorry

What's good with The Beat? Man, I ain't never really been sorry for nothing, and I ain't a sorry ninja. But I will apologize if I feel I need to. But you won't hear me say "sorry." And if I apologize to someone, I gotta really care about that female or my ninja.

So there you go, saying sorry ain't my thang.

But anyways I got court on Monday the 7 of July. They either gonna play me or I'ma hear good news. But holla at me Beat I already know you 'bout to talk some shhh.

-T-Macaroni

From The Beat: We don't want to disappoint you, so here's what we're 'bout to say. First, on the "sorry" or not, do you believe that if you say "sorry," then you are a sorry person? That's interesting. As to the court "playin' you" or "good news," we wonder if there is anything in between. Should you pay any price for your responsibility in all this? Or, do you think you've already paid enough?

If This Is All There Is

If this is all there is, "Rest in Paradise" to my best friend, Torrellz, who I lost in the beginning of this year. Who know if there wasn't Hell or Heaven, where would my best friend be? And who knows what would have happened in the meanwhile? If there was no paradise, where would this world be? Would my best friend still be here? That's why I find the hard way out and stay true to myself, and think of the good patterns and steps that take me in life, follow my path, and stay up. "Rest in Peace"

-NuNu

From The Beat: No one knows the answers to these questions. What we do know, though, is that if you are really thinking of "good patterns and steps" to take in your life, then your future will be better than your past. Stay positive and striving.

Tired Of This

What's up with the Beat? I'm just chillin' here. I'm just waiting here till my court date on August 11th. I don't know what the heck is going to happen to me. I've been bored for the past three months that I've been here.

I'm tired of this. I wake up every day and ask myself, "Can I go home now?" Then the reality kicks in when I'm still here at the end of the day.

I'm tired of this stuff. I want to...

-Wiggims

From The Beat: The proof of how tired you are of this will be tested by your own actions when this sad episode in your life is behind you. If you continue to do the things that lead you here, then it will be obvious that you weren't tired enough. We have high hopes for you, though, because we see what skills you have. Only you know if you will put those skills to use in a positive way so that you can stop being "tired of this stuff..."

I Saw...

I saw a car accident this one day, across the street from my girl's house. This one hella old guy was driving a truck, and I guess he lost control, and he hit three other cars. I think he was in his 90s, 'cause he was really old and he could barely walk. That was the first car accident that I saw happen right in front of me. It happened hella fast and the car could have hit me if I didn't stop, so I was happy to see the car before it did anything to me. Only two people got hurt, but not the old guy, just a lady and man that was in one of the parked cars.

-Peru

From The Beat: It's scary how fast accidents like that can happen, and how a person's life can be changed so quickly. We're glad that you were not hurt in this accident, and hope that the people that got hurt weren't hurt too badly. And, we hope this makes you a more careful driver.

Two Mistakes, And Counting

What's up with The Beat Within? It's ya boy, Young V.T. Well, I'm 'bout to tell y'all about how my life been in the past five years.

Well, my first mistake was when I was in a stolen car, and we crashed. The second mistake I had was, I was hanging out, selling drugs, when I got caught up and sent to YGC. But, yeah, I'm in this thing right now, waitin' to get out. This is all I got to say for The Beat right now.

-Young Squeeze

From The Beat: How many "mistakes" do you think you get before you make the wrong one and pay a much bigger price? This is a good description of your past, but what are you going to do to change your future?



I'm Sorry

I'm sorry for everything I've done
I have messed up all my life and
Now im back here in YGC again
I promised you I wasn't going to come back
So I'm sorry mom
I love you

-Cholo

From The Beat: Why can't you keep your promise to your mother? Don't you think that her sacrifices for you justify some sacrifices from you so that you can pay back a little of what you owe her?

We Miss You

I was born in the Mission where everyday is a struggle.
Big homies slangin' pills, hustlin', tryin' to bubble.
RIP my ninja Dojah. Man, they took you away.
I got tears in my eyes, and in my heart I feel pain.
Yeah, the game ain't the same without you by our side.
Just save a spot for me until the day I die.
Yeah, my ninja Dojah, man they took you away.
I got pain in my heart from the same day.
I'm just thinking back then when we was on the treo.
Now the game is messed up man. Why you have to go?
We miss you Dojah.

-Lil' G

From The Beat: Like a terrible disease, the streets are claiming a whole generation of young men. Do you plan to change anything about how you live your life so that nobody will be writing an RIP poem for you? Or, do you think you can just keep doing the same thing without facing the same consequences?

Heaven's Mansion

Well, I believe that there is a heavenly mansion for me and my goons. And for the dead homies I believe that there is a heaven and hell.

But to tell you the truth, I don't care where I go, you dig. Once I'm gone, it really don't matter where I go. I'm no longer living, so I don't care. I can tell y'all where I would like to go. I only hope that I got family members that passed and I hope that they are living the big life up there in the gates.

I don't wish for death, but living that fast life, ain't no telling what's going to happen. I got to think positive. I just wish that my big homie and my goons know that there is a thug mansion.

-Tray

From The Beat: We're a little confused. You say it doesn't matter what happens to you after you die because you're "no longer living." But you also say that you believe in heaven and hell, so why aren't you concerned about where you will be spending your eternity? If you and your "goons" end up in a heavenly mansion, then who goes to hell?

Saying "I'm Sorry"

What's good with The (damn) Beat! Back again on some B.S... But yeah, I'll tell you what I'm sorry for:

I'm sorry for hurtin' my parents...

For my decision making...

So I hope they'll forgive me when I say...

I'm sorry....

So peep this... That is the only thing I'm sorry for. To all the homies, keep your head up...

We taking over!

-Ulala

From The Beat: Saying you're sorry for hurting your parents is a very important thing to do. If it is a true apology, it should be accompanied by a change in behavior, too. So, we hope you're right when you say you're taking over — but what you need to take over is control of your own life, so that you can make your parents proud!

This Ain't 'Bout To Go Bad

Man, what's up with The Beat? I can't say much, because I haven't been in YGC that long, but I'ma tell you a lil' bit. When I first step through them doors, I'm like, "Oh, this ain't 'bout to go bad." Man, they give you a lil' bit of food and you gotta be in your room for a long time. But I'm finna get out so I can be with the fam bam.

A'ight, but I'm gone. Boom.

-Young Fatdaddy

From The Beat: There isn't a lot for us to comment. You can write more than this, especially if this is your first time. Tell us what is different than what you expected and what is the same. Tell us how you're going to stay out of here in the future.

Life Is What You Make It

Life is hard through ups and downs. Even though I got everything I want, not everything is perfect. Somehow, I keep on losing and I'm the one doing time. But what can I do?

- Doing Time

From The Beat: This is hardly worth publishing. When you write "somehow" you lose, and ask what you can do, you're telling us that you'll just keep facing the same consequences for the same acts. It's time for you to examine that word, "somehow," and figure out exactly how.

Done It All

Yes, what's good with The Beat? I didn't wanna write about a topic, so I'ma just freestyle. All I gotta say is that I'm just happy to be alive, and all ninjas keep ya head up.

But yeah, when I get out I'ma just knock out my probation or group home or whatever. because now I got people to live for. That's all. I'm gone. Done done it all.

-Mo'

From The Beat: You mean, you are not enough of a reason to live? You have someone else to live for? Is this a girl? A baby? A family member? Who?

If This Is All There Is

Wha's up with The Beat, man? This yo' boy Bear. For all the people out there, man, there is a heaven, man, and I know Big Bra D-Meezie went to the Thug Mansion. He was captain of my 'jets. So whoever got a problem, holla at me man. We all we got. Everybody who believe in God and repent to him will forgive and open the gates to The Thug Mansion.

-Bear

From The Beat: So, if you believe that true repentance will lead God to forgive you and open heaven's gates, then that empty cliché we keep reading, "We all we got," must be a lie! If "you all you got," then you don't have God. So, which is it?

A Reputable Writer

What's good with The Beat? Man, this that ninja Mac, ya dig. I ain't got too much to say, but put my piece in The Beat 'cause y'all stay playing me. Once people read my Beat, they gone respect it 'cause I'm a reputable ninja for reals.

But I'ma talk about my fallen soldiers, man, 'cause I really miss my ninjas. I'm just going to give a shout out to my ninjas.

-Mac

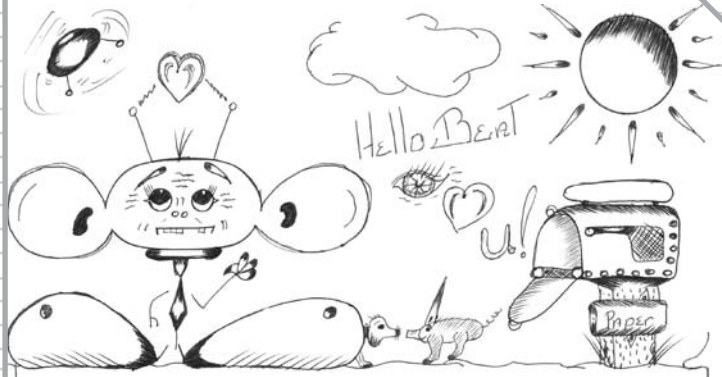
From The Beat: We don't see how we're playing you. If you write a decent piece, we'll publish it. So whether you get your piece in The Beat or not is entirely up to you. Does the loss of your homies to the street wars make you want to do anything differently?

Karma Catches Up

What's up with The Beat Within, man? I been locked up seven times. Five times I did something, but two times I did not do shhh. I'm up in here for one of them times I did not do nothing. I feel this is karma for all the stupid things I did. I just want to say sorry for all the things I did.

-Karma

From The Beat: You're thinking more like an adult than a child when you accept responsibility for "the stupid things" you've done, even if you're innocent of what they say you did this time. Karma is like a scale; you can balance out the "stupid" stuff by doing smart stuff, so that you start building some Karmic weight on that side of the scales...



Doing Me

What's good with The Beat? This yo' boy V-Guttah again. Man, I hate coming back in this mutha...

Anyway, it's good to be free. No, fo' real. It's hella stuff out there new, and the whole nine yards. Man, Beat, I'ma tell y'all right now, it ain't my time to come back. But at the same time, I'm trying to get shhh over with. So yeah, I'm trying to serve all my time in this hole, so I can just go home and bust big moves, like I was doin' when I was out.

Ha ha ha ha. Man, I'm just laughing at this weak-ass system trying to put a ninja away for good. But it ain't gone stop me from doing me!

To all doing time in any program, keep y'all heads up, and remember, we do time, time don't do us!

-V-G

From The Beat: You say you hate coming back here (and we don't doubt it), and at the same time, you say it won't stop you from "doing you." Apparently, you love "doing you" more than you hate coming here. One day, that will change. We definitely hope you never give the system the power it needs to "put a ninja away for good," but don't fall for the lie that they "can't keep a ninja down forever." They can and they do!

Choices?

What are choices? Do you know what a choice is? Have you ever wondered what a choice does? Man, I know I do! Do you even know what I meant by this? Ha ha ha (I know you don't).

Damn, I know I hate the choices I choose sometimes. But, man, is it the right choice? Am I doin' the right thing? Why do I feel so confused, then?

Please, won't somebody help me? Well, damn, can you answer this? Have you ever made choices that you regretted or wished you could change?

Well, me bein' the person I am, I just know it's in my veins. But there is one mo' thang that I could like to say. All you youngstas who make them bad choices, betta keep ya heads up, because you will make it through this some day.

-Taryn

From The Beat: Everyone we know has made choices that were not the right ones to make, either because they were hurt by the choices, or they hurt someone else. All you can do is set your sights on the goals you want to accomplish, then think carefully about the choices you will need to make in order to achieve them. It's not simple, but you can do it.

Rap

What's up with The Beat? I'm finna write a quick rap:

Who hotter then me?

I got a question for the streets:

Who hotter than me?

Somebody put me out;

I'm on fire.

Somebody tell the feds,

I retire.

I know a lot of rappers for hire.

Streets don't mess with you 'cause you a liar.

Really you preachin' to the choir.

Ya buzz in the street expired.

I count a hun'ed, though I'm kind of tired.

Keep ya girl from round me for I buy her.

I got it on me 'cause it's lighter.

Sincerely, your Mr. Rocket

-Rocket

From The Beat: All that heat must be cooling behind these walls! We hope you find a way to stay free, because without freedom, the fire goes out.

My Proudest Accomplishment

What's up with The Beat? This that ninja Mike writing another week behind these walls. My proudest accomplishment is coming up in a few days. I'm getting out this hole once and for all. They finally about to let a ninja go. I can't wait.

I got one more workshop and then I'm out of here.

-Mike

From The Beat: We are standing up and clapping! Of course, we'll miss you in the workshops (we all we got), but we never want to see you behind walls again!

I Saw...

I saw money in his wallet

I saw a weed sack in his fat container with a lot of weed bags in there

I saw his chain on his neck

I saw his i-pod in his back pocket

I saw my friend grab him

I saw my other friend sock him in his jaw

I saw him fall

I grabbed his shhh

We smoked his shhh

Then I saw it was all bullshhh

It's all bullshhh that I'm talking 'bout pellow.

-Pellow

From The Beat: If this is truly bs, you managed to include a lot of interesting details... But if you're using your imagination, then why not describe something more uplifting than a cowardly and childish robbery?

Apologizing to Myself

I never said "sorry" or apologized to anyone, because I feel I don't owe no one but to myself. I feel my apology is owed to me, myself, personally, is because the thing I did, and the things I would like to change, and that's why I feel I owe myself an apology.

-NuNu

From The Beat: We love the theme of this piece, but there is no meat on these bones. What turns an ordinary piece into a great one is the examples you give to illustrate what you mean.

Trophies And Medals

My proudest accomplishment is my trophies from football and basketball and my medals, and going to the cheer leading rallies and traveling. I like people seeing me doing my thing on the field and see my talents.

-D-Mac

From The Beat: We want more details! Like, what did you get the trophies and medals for? And where did you travel? And what are you doing in here when you have skills and talents that could take you so far out there?

Confused

Confused about the system and what it is

Why is the law involved with the cops?

Running from the feds is all I know

Tryna sell something to get this dough

Confused about who I am

All in jail, workin' for the man

Tryna figure out were I stand

-No Name

From the Beat: Well, we hope you figure out where you stand real soon because, unless you do, you're likely to be sitting right where you are again.

The Pain Of My Parents

What went through my mind when I was reading this topic? When I was reading this topic reminded me when my dad used to beat my mom when I was just a lil' kid. I couldn't do shhh about it. That used to hurt me a lot. But not anymore because he doesn't hit her anymore.

What hurts me now is that my mom cries when I'm locked up and because the tatt's I got on me.

It hurts to see my jefita cry for the shhh I do, but this is my life, but still I'm make my jefita stop her bad days by making her happy, and I still will live mi vida loca

-Young and Thinking

From The Beat: It must be hard seeing your mother hurt so much, emotionally and physically. How are you going to manage living your crazy life and making your loved ones happy, especially your mom?

The Pains of Life

I think that the pain of life is when you don't have a father. That's where some gangsters join in gangs because they don't have love in their heart or because they might need somebody in their life.

For example I got a friend who doesn't have a father and got angry to life because thinks why he didn't have a father. Now he is in juvenile hall fighting a case that is very hard and he might go to prison for many years and that's me.

Most of the people who are in jails don't have a father or a mother and they might be in doing prison so to life. And that's their pain to life.

-Elvis

From The Beat: Instead of channeling your anger towards gangs and crime, use that anger as passion to succeed in life. What you've experienced should teach you what kind of person you want to be. Growing up without a father is hard, but it's something you have to learn to live with. Look, pass the difficult things, and start working towards the good things.

Most of the people who are in jails don't have a father or a mother and they might be in doing prison so to life. And that's their pain to life.

Once Upon A Time

Once upon a time, I was with my girl having fun and everything, you know. We were at the park talking about lots of things like about what do we wanna do when we grow up.

Well I told her that I want to go to the Army because I want to become a better man than I already am, then get a good job, buy a house.

I asked her what does she want to do. She told me that she wants to have a big family, have like about four or five kids, go out with them, and have fun as a family.

Now that I'm here she is a few month of pregnant, and she is happy.

Well Beat I really don't have much to say. See you guys next week. Bye.

-Jose

From the Beat: Planning your future in a positive way is great. It sounds like you know what you want in life. When you get out stick to this plan. Do what you need to do to be where you want to be. Remember that this is a lot of responsibility, being a good parent, and don't do anything to jeopardize your family's future. Mature up!

Gay Pride

I love guys
With blue eyes
Staring at the skies
Full of pride
If I'm nice
I get a prize
I'm gay
And can't
Deny

-J

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing this! It takes a lot of courage to share something that is this personal. It is important not to ever deny yourself something that feels right to you, as long as nobody gets hurt.

Same Sex Marriage, Who Cares

Same sex to me doesn't really bothers me. I think gay people should have he right to get married just as everyone else.

I don't see why people trip so much off gay people getting married. I think if anything they should look more at people getting married more than once.

-Frankie

From The Beat: It's great you feel that everyone has a chance at marriage. Why do you think that people getting married multiple times is bad? We want to hear more of your opinions.

The Wall Of Pain

The biggest pain of life is being behind walls, away from my mom. What hurts is knowing that I'm in here and I can't protect her from the outs. And knowing she cries every day knowing I'm a soldier and I got put in work because the streets are calling me.

Knowing she prays that I come home alive from the streets or from this hell behind walls. But no pain is worse than knowing my mom is in pain and dropping tears knowing her baby boy is living the life he chose.

- Lil' One

From The Beat: You're just saying what she goes through and your thoughts about this topic, but there isn't a clue in your writing that can tell us that you are willing to stop MAKING your mother suffer. What's wrong with you? Why are you playing the feelings of the person who has done everything to you, from bringing you into this world to shedding tears of pain?

Young And Foolish

I rep my town
Where we don't play
We know this ain't a game
It's the real deal
And it takes time to heal
I want to be out and chill
Get out and party
Sipping on 40's and Bacardi
So lets get down
I don't play around
So listen to the sound
And freak all you clowns
Can you feel the heat
While I write the beat
I'm crazy in the head
Yea that's what I said
"Till Next Time Beat"

-Spooky

From The Beat: Crazy in the head, eh? It's important to acknowledge that it is not a game, as well as how long the healing process can be for those hurt playing "the game".

Joining The U.S. Military

I've thought about joining the military, ever since I was a kid. My mama don't want me to, but I told her if I did, it would be to better myself and make some good changes in my life, but I ain't feeling going to fight in the war or anything like that. Killing families and shhh, that's just sad. But I've thought about joining the military, but not for all the wrong reasons it brings to everyone and everything.

-P-Wee

From The Beat: Yes, the military can give people a lot of opportunities but it seems as though this war isn't doing much for anyone. But maybe things will change and you can find other ways to get those same opportunities.

Best Friends

I would like to talk about my closest friend that I have been through a lot with. I have met this person in October of 2007.

I can remember the first day. She was all quiet in the beginning. It took her about a few days to start talking. Those first few months we started getting close. We started going out and having lots of fun together. We always cut school together and got into trouble. I remember she was always there for me in the good times and bad! And I thank her for everything she has done for me.

Most people say to never trust someone because in the end they hurt you twice as hard, but I know she is not like that! Until this day, she is still with me! Locked up together and getting out together. Hopefully if you are reading this I would just like to say "thanks" for being my friend and for staying by my side!

-Sonia

From The Beat: It is important to have close friends, but how can your friends help you instead of encouraging you to do things that will get you in trouble?

What I Want To Be

When I grow up I want to be something. I don't want to be some thug, always watching my back for the police, or for anyone else who would want me not to succeed. I have done my share of mistakes and am ready to get back on track and out of the hall. I hope I still have a shot at going to college. If not, I am not sure where I will end up.

-Ducky

From The Beat: Ducky, you can quack just about wherever you want, if you want it badly enough. Which means - if you're willing to work hard enough to be there. California has an excellent community college system. You could start there, part time or full time. One of the few good things that sometimes comes from the kinds of mistakes you've made is that there are scholarship programs available. At least, there used to be. We hope it's still the case. Talk with your PO about it. Contrary to what you might think, POs love to help kids find resources that can help them turn their lives around. Get busy.

A Huge Mistake

I'm here because I did a big mistake. I might be facing 29 to life. I regret doing what I did. I'm sorry for what I did. Mistakes happen to everyone, small ones and big ones. I can't take back what I did, so I just have to keep my head up and make the best out of it. A lot of people say this but I have truly learned my lesson.

The lesson that I have learned is that "Don't do stuff to others that you don't want to happen to you."

-Claudia

From The Beat: Many people don't learn this lesson in their whole life. You already have lots of wisdom, so keep your head up and keep gaining more knowledge.

First Birthday Party

To tell you the truth, Beat, I really didn't have birthday parties. On my birthdays I would just get a cake when I got home from school.

I've only have had one real birthday party in my life so far, and guess what? It was a party I had this year when turned fourteen. It wasn't the kind of party with all my friends or just going somewhere with them. It was more of a family thing. We all went to my Nana's house. I was just thinking we were just going to have another cake again! But then we got there and it looked like no one was home. I thought, "Great, how much you want to bet my Nana made some plans to go somewhere." But when we got in the house and turned on the light almost all of my family was there, even my best friend and boyfriend. I was so happy, I was in shock. It was my first birthday party and I loved it. It lasted the whole night.

My favorite part was when my mom made my boyfriend dance with her. It was so funny, he didn't know what to do but he did it anyway. That night, to me, will last forever. It was my first birthday party on the outs and it won't be my last. I plan on having my next one just the same!!

Late!

-Monkey

The Beat Within: This is a great piece because it describes a happy moment, which there just aren't enough of in this publication. Thanks for sharing and many happy birthday parties in the future.

Ghetto Boy

I never thought it would affect me so much later
until I saw the hustle
when ninja ridin' the stretch navigator - until now.
Seen' the homies on the block with rocks in their
pockets

- I never realized there'd be homicide.

They told me he'd live.

That's what they said when my homie died.

Can all these ninjas bring my ninja back?

-C

From The Beat: We are sorry for your loss, and we all know the answer to that question. The more important question now is - how can this madness stop? How many young men and women must die before people wise up? Any suggestions?

Homies And Phonies

Homies is the ones you grown up in the hood with
Phonies try to get jumped in the hood

Homies not just got your back, but your front too

Phonies will hide their scared ass behind you

Homies would put money in your room when you need
it most

Phonies would jack your stuff while you in another
trance

Homies could pull a trigger for you

Phonies could be able to pass a cold shivering thumpa

Homies would take the blame for your troubles

Phonies would put all the heat on you

Homies will take a bullet in the chest for you

Phonies will hide their scared ass behind you again

Homies call you brother,

Phonies call you homies, but it ain't nothing to a this
homie...

-Bay Hussla

The Beat Within: Hmmm, some of these distinctions seem a little blurry. What does it take to turn one of these into the other? Which one are you? Hopefully not the fool, but suspect you have the sickness, so your not thinking twice

Crazy Love

What's up Beaters this your girl Destiny! Ha-ha I love writing because it kills time. Que no?

Well, crazy love, let me tell you how it started, ok? Well, it was six and a half months ago when I met my love Jose. I remember the first time we chilled. I came to San Jose and we met up at the Light Rail Station. I was hecka shy! But yeah, we were just posted there and then he asked if I wanted to stay at his sister's pad, and me – like an idiot – wasn't tripping off school or nothing so we went to his sister's pad and we chilled.

We had met a month before that over the phone but I was with some fool named "Youngster," so I would always be with him, so I used to tell my other man Jose that I was grounded and he would say "whatever." Then, for some reason, I started to hecka like him, so I left "Youngster" and met up with my man and ended up living with him for five months.

I would go home to go to school, but that's it, but than I said screw it and one day I had my man and his homie swoop me up from school then we smashed to the hood to my man's sister's pad and got faded. It was my last day of school, to me at least.

I kept in touch with my dad, but started living with my man and one day in March I called my PO and said: "What's up?"

She got angry and said she's putting a warrant out.

I laughed and hung up. But I wasn't really tripping 'cause I knew my man loved me. I told him to get a job cause he was 18 and he said why? I said 'cause I want you to buy me shhh.

He said okay, then he got a good job with his mom. He got paid every Friday – three bills!

Man, I was spoiled! I changed everything for him. I lost my homies and homegirls and my family, but we're still together and I trust him. He's mine and that's all.

Now all I worry about is the case he got caught up for, the bud we had in the car the day I got caught! Man, he writes me though. It makes my day! Well, he thinks I'm cheating but he'll realize my eyes are for him only. Stay up everyone. I'm out!

-Destiny

From The Beat: That's quite a story, Destiny. What did you do all day if you didn't go to school and your man was providing for you? Did you ever feel powerless because you were depending so much on your man?

Not Able to Sleep

What drives me crazy is not being able to sleep at night. Every day I wake up restless. I'm tired of it. My meds don't work, and my mom is locked up, same with my brother and me. I always wonder if we're all going crazy at the same time.

- Detained Youngster

The Beat Within: This is a short but powerful, powerful piece. Perhaps you should take some time to send out strength to your family when you wake up in the middle of the night. They probably need it as much as you do.

What You Want To Be

Well, what I want to be when I grow up is someone who makes a lot of money without committing a crime. A gambler is what I want to be. I know I'll be good at it because I play cards all the time in my room.

-Carlos

From The Beat: Hmmm, not sure gambling as a career is the way to go if you are looking to be on the straight side, but there are a lot of people playing poker on TV lately. Keep practicing.

Joining The Military

Joining the military ain't fair, because if you don't wanna join, you get locked up. That ain't good. We should have the right to vote on that.

-Carnelian

From The Beat: What are you talking about? There is no draft. NO one is forcing anyone to join the military.

An Animator

When I grow up, I want to be a cartoon animator. I have always been into drawing. I am good at it. Throughout grade school, in every grade, I have gotten "most artistic" awards. But then, I got into all the partying and getting caught up for stupid shit. Now I hardly have time to draw. It's like I traded something I love for something I hate – being locked up.

I'm gonna stop this whole cycle and get on that cartoon track. So watch out for my cartoons soon. So the moral I'm trying to get through is don't let things that are not that important get in the way of the things you love to do. Lates.

-Sean

From The Beat: This is great, Sean! We would love to see some of your animations next time you have the opportunity to contribute to The Beat. Great advice, too.

Today

Today I found out that my mom has a serious heart condition, and I can't do anything but pray. I love my mom more than anything, or anyone. She is my rock, my hero. I know God will watch over her. I got him on my side.

-Loving Son

From The Beat: We are sorry to hear about your mom's illness. We hope you can soon be by her side.

This Boy

Beat, I want to talk about this boy named Casper. I love the way he writes his stuff. He talks about the darkest things but they sound so good. When The Beat comes out, he is the first person I look for. I can't wait to read his next piece. I would love to write as good as him. My favorite piece of his is "Cemetery Night." I hope he keeps on writing, it's one of the things I look forward to.

-Monkey

From The Beat: Wow, this is great and really what The Beat is all about – encouraging and connecting with each other.

Mistakes

Every time I wake up in this place I remember about all the mistakes I've made.

To tell you the truth, I'm in the hall for a mistake – a big mistake. It all started when I was hanging out with a so-called "snake." A person that you thought you could trust, and the first mistake I made was to trust him, because we've been through thick and thin. Now, every time I think about him I feel like sinking my fist down his throat. But anyway, he stole a golf cart belonging to some apartments and I had to take the blame for him because he was scared and left me to get caught up, so they charged me with grand theft auto. Never trust no-one.

-Angel

From The Beat: Sometimes when you get burned by someone it's hard to trust again, but it does seem like you both did the crime, so maybe you shouldn't just pin it all on him? Forgive and move on.

Thoughts

I'm here to write to all locked up and to tell you to keep your head up. Don't let no one bring you down, but to be educated and never forget where you came from.

Well to tell you the truth Beat, what I want to be when I grow up is a teacher. There are very few of us Chicano teachers, and if there are, they forgot where they came from. I'm from the home of the brave and the land of the palm trees. Well I'm out Beat.

-Kane

From The Beat: That's true, there is a lack of teachers and writers of color - all colors. So, pursue your goals because it will help the future.

My Topic Is Mama

Mama, sorry for all the pain I caused. Sorry for all those times I was disrespecting. I didn't know how much pain I caused you. Mama, please forgive me for what I did in the past. Now I know that you were just trying to be a good mom, but I was just too blind to see or even realize how much you mean to me.

Every time I walk out that front door you would always tell me: "Mija, be careful. Stop gang banging. Don't hang around with the wrong crowd."

I would always tell you: "Don't worry about me, Ma, I'm gonna be just fine."

You would always cry and I would tell you: "Mama, don't cry, dry those tears from rolling down those eyes."

And you would tell me: "Mija, only if you see what I see, then you would understand me and see where I'm coming from but you don't. Ezzy you're too hardheaded and you're very stubborn and you don't like when people try to tell you something. Right away, you think they are trying to punish you, but I'm telling you all this because I love you, mija and I don't want anything to happen to you."

Well Mama, I understand. Now I know how you feel inside. Every time you come to visit me, I always apologize for all the wrong I've done.

It took me a couple of years to finally open my brown eyes and see what I had to see and you know what that was? I needed to stop thinking about myself and my homeboys and kicking it with the hood. Don't get me wrong, I love the homies to death, I'm gonna ride or die, always be a gangsta boo, but it ain't gonna get you nowhere in life. If you want food on the table or clothes on your back and to be independent, you gotta work hard for it and I don't mean hustle for it. I mean if you want it, you could get it and I ain't talking about chump change. I'm talking about some really fetti that you could just pull out and don't have to worry about spending it - that's what I'm talking about. I know I went of subject but I just had to put it out there, if ya feel me - then respond on this topic and if ya are reading my Beat, I hope it gets someone thinking. It aint much, but it's something for you to read while you up in your room while you ain't got nothing to do but count them bricks, que no?

Well, to all in the hall, don't trip about anything. Just stay up and get that diploma because I think all the homies should be well educated because in life you need that diploma. To the peeps that graduated in June, congratulations and to all that are soon to be, keep it up well I would write more but I have to cut, much love and respect. Lates..."

-Ezzy

From The Beat: This is sage advice mixed in with a few emotions a lot of us need to express to our mothers. So thanks Ezzy, we miss you and hope you are doing good.

Always And Forever

Always and forever used to be our thing.

Now, they're three words that don't mean a thing.

I trusted her with my secrets, tears and thoughts, but always and forever put me behind bars and made her friends with cops.

I was stupid for believing you'd always be there.

I was stupid for believing you'd always care.

Sixteen years old, filled with hate, looking for some love, my one love mate,

always and forever is what they told me.

It seems her real intentions were just to fold me.

To her, I am alone once again.

-Grumps

From The Beat: Ouch, betrayal in the heart is one of the worst kinds. But sometimes forgiving is important and can make you the bigger person than bitterness and revenge.

A Father

When I grow up, I want to be a Dad to my one-year-old daughter Corine. I've been locked up all my daughter's life. I haven't really seen her grow up, so that's my goal.

I'm still going to do what I do - chilling with my hood - but to my little angel baby, I'm going to do what's right.

-Chucky

From The Beat: Hmmm, this seems to be a big contradiction, just like your tattoos. How can you take care of your daughter if you refuse to change your ways? Maybe you need to figure this out before you really kick yourself in the ass!

I-O-I

Isn't it funny

Bs get all lovey dovey

Soft bears, pink bunnies

Isn't that shhh funny

One timers, shots and dimmers

Gold diggers, stick lickers

The partying rots my liver

Toes curl, back shivers

This is a night to remember

Remember my birthdays in December

My tongue is the tickler

Your body makes me a sinner

Damn, is all I can say

Out love is the same

Legs, open, very, easily

Chests are all weazy

And last night was just a teazy

-Anthony

From The Beat: Anthony, always with the rhyming. We challenge you to write a poem that does something different. Why don't you write about something that has to do with the changes you want to make in your life?

What I Want

Things I want to be are impossible for me to be, but one thing for sure - I think I could be a role model.

I know I screwed up, but in this world of crooks, nobody could be perfect. I got a little carnal, he always wants to copy me. He always tries to dress like me, act like me. I figure if I don't show him the bad life, he might just go in the right direction. At least one of us could put a smile on my mom's face.

-Edgar

From The Beat: Making the choice to become a positive role model is a good one. When you see someone acting like you, it makes you understand how much power we have in the world. Use that power for good.

The Musketeers!!

This is Tenesha. Here's my short story!

I was on the run with my cousin Richard and my ex-boyfriend Joshy, and I have to admit it was fun!

We had our good times and dang did I have my bad times with my ex-boyfriend! But, oh well, now of course he's off doing his own things! All I could do is reminisce on our good times!

When I first ran into Richard, I was shocked to see him! We ended up going back to my ex's house and tripping out on things!

My ex would do the dumbest things! I'll be in my room talking to my roommate about how we all ended up together and how I got caught and the thing that sucks is that my ex-boyfriend ended up doing me dirty.

Well, I was locked up and he was lying to me every time he would write me! But I guess he didn't know that hella people would tell me who he would have at his house and what days he would throw his parties!

Anyways, thanks to my cousin Richard he always kept me on my toes and still does! He keeps me laughing and helps me have my head up when he sees me down! I just hope he stays out of trouble and always has his head held high!

As for my ex, Joshy, I know he was out there handling 'cause I know how he is! But wish me luck! To everyone that knows, stay up and be good!

-Tenesha

From The Beat: This is quite a story. All the stories of being on the run should be written down and collected into an anthology. They are very interesting stories.

A Lesson Learned

I made a mistake, did something I regretted and learned from it. I was being dumb and got locked up, and now I can't support my girlfriend at the time she needs me the most. I've learned from my mistake not to do things like that, so that when people need me the most I'll be there for them. I've mistreated my blessings and now I'm full of regret and sorrow.

- Juju

From The Beat: It sounds like you really feel as though you want to make a change, which is the first step for the rest of your life. Don't just dwell on the regret but recreate yourself.

Baby It's True

As always I ain't feelin' any of these topics so of course I'm gonna talk about this boy. Well, I always see him but I'm not able to talk to him. I wish I could. Every time I see him, he always puts a smile on my face. I like that he could make me smile cause when I'm mad then I'm mad at the world. But when it comes to him, it's like I'm in a whole different world. I'm telling you I don't know what it is but there's just something about him I can't get over it. I don't care what anyone thinks about us. Shhh, what could we say? It ain't our fault that God made us this way. All you people go head and keep hatin' 'cause what hurts us only makes us stronger. I am the one you love to hate.

Anyways, I know you been reading my writing so I hope you feel everything that I say about you. Well me and you are both getting older and we've known each other for a coo' minute. So you need to think about what you want to do with your life, 'cause I know what I want. I'm gonna do what I gotta do and handle mine. I guess what I'm trying to say is whenever you're done playing games, then come get at me. I seen you at the meeting. You did say what's up, but in what kind of way?

I ain't trying to play games with you 'cause you already tried to play me like a fool and I ain't the one. I already told you I ain't trying to get hurt. I been through that shhh one too many

Man, I'm Trippin'

What the hell am I suppose to do?

I'm in here for being a fool

I'm thinkin' about all the things I miss

My nephew, my niece, the best for them I wish

Damn, my moms all by her self

If I wasn't here I can help her with all her wealth

16 years of my life and now he's tryin' to be a dad

You were never around, well, all times got bad

But it's all good - you come around

Now my smiles no longer a frown

I never understood how to hold my head high

Until I learned of the man in the sky

I hate not being in control of my situation

All cause of me, I'm on probation

Do this and do that, that all they say

But forget that I'm gonna do my way

The shhh I do, I know I'm right

If I'm wrong I can't sleep at night

But I stay true to my understanding

I want a good life that's all I'm demanding

I can't wait to get out so I can

Stop trippin'.

-Marvin

The Beat Within: You say you're gonna do your way, but perhaps getting out of your situation will happen when you learn to play within the rules of the system, or stay forever trapped

To Be Proud

I'm proud because I just had a baby on June 22nd. I had a little girl.

It felt good going to see my lady. I was out for like 17 hours and during that time my baby was born.

It ain't like everyone says, that you faint when it comes out. It's different. I guess you would just have to experience it yourself. I liked it and I got to cut the umbilical cord, too.

I can't wait to have another one, so I could go through it again.

Well Beat, till the pencil meets the paper, late!

-Gary and Ruby

From The Beat: Congrats Gary! Wow, being there for something as amazing as a birth would be really life-changing. It sounds like you are already ready to have another child, but maybe you should really work on raising this one and taking care of yourself first.

times and I'm koo off that shhh. I'm done with all that. I always speak my mind to you even though it's through paper, but still at least I'm trying. I'm still waiting to hear you out. I just sit here thinking if you care. I wish you would write me but it's coo' - you probably got other shhh to worry about. If I'm too much for you just let me know' cause as fast as I came, I could go.

I don't know what to do I'm stuck without a clue. I sit here thinking: What should I do? Something is telling me just to let go. I know you probably don't care, so that's why I think twice. Should I or not? I heard you're starting the next generation of the Brady Bunch. You might think that's a joke, but it ain't. I'm kind of getting tired of writing about you cause I keep hearing shhh about you. That's why, when I see you I start to feel confused. I don't know maybe it's all in my mind. I hope you grow up and start to be real wit' me. I'm lost in this world not knowing what to do. I say you're like an angel too good to be true. I want to take a chance on you but baby it's up to you. I just want to know where were you when I needed you the most?

-Malina

From The Beat: It's almost too personal, yet we think this piece is insightful for all given the way you put it out there. It seems like the Beat pieces really seem to help you feel through your emotions for this person, so good luck.

I'm Worth It!

The thing that really, really reached me was being locked up the third time. The first couple of times I was in here it felt like whatever. But after my third time I feel stupid.

I just keep thinking I'm so stupid. I didn't learn the first time. I keep thinking what's happened to me. I didn't use to be so hard-headed. Before when I know I was doing something wrong, I would change what I was doing and I would do the right thing.

That's why I'm so confused with myself, 'cause now when I'm doing something wrong, I think to myself, "well I'm gonna pay for what I'm doing anyways, so I better make it worth getting in trouble for".

Now that I'm in here locked up, I feel stupid, because instead of making it worth it, I could have changed what I was doing and I probably wouldn't be in here. Because whatever I did, it's still not worth being here.

-Kristina

From The Beat: We're glad that you've realized that it's not worth it, even if it did take you three times. Now that you've realized being hard-headed doesn't pay, how will you choose? We hope next time you remember this lesson and choose the right path.

Guess Who?

Everyday I look into her face, it brightens my day
And I thank God for this woman as I kneel down and pray

If they ever take her from me I'm a be down to fight
cause my life is a disaster if she ain't in my sight
She was the only one who raised me when I grew up in the hood

And taught me right from wrong, so I could do what I could.

I feel empty when she's not around, but then I wonder why

Hearing the voice of God make it believe that you can fly.
She be flowing through my mind every second of the day

But she's the only one who helped me find my head,
somewhere to lay

Hearing her cry makes me explode like a bomb

You want to know who then take a guess it's my Mom.

-Javaughn

From The Beat: The best way you can show love to your mom is by listening to her and following her rules. You will have the chance to be with her again. What choices you'll make when the old temptations present themselves? Getting yourself locked up is just breaking her heart. What do you need to start doing differently today to prepare yourself for a life lived that will make your mom proud of her son.

I'm Choosing Forward

Sometimes, late at night in my cell I ask myself this question-is life worth fighting for?

At first I didn't care. I'd say it doesn't matter anymore!
Only because this is a low time in my life.

Then I see my mother and my nana's face. They give me hope, strength, guidance. And then I think of my boyfriend, Ryan. He's always telling me, "Babe, do the right thing!" Their words of wisdom is what keeps me going everyday.

I tell myself five days left Sandra, don't give up now!
Even when I start to give up I tell myself, "Everything's gonna be ok!" Keep strong and time will go faster!

And when I start to lose hope I pray to God, I asked Him to forgive me! I say I'm sorry! God send me home to my family! Let time go by faster...because I do believe in second chances. If I stay positive and tell myself you're gonna go home and start where you left off. Try and make-up for my mistakes. Then I believe God will look into my heart and see how much I need a second chance. And given the opportunity could change, not because I have to, but because for the first time in my life I want to!

I want to make my family and my boyfriend, Ryan, proud and prove I can be the good girl they used to know. But most of all for myself... to make myself happy. So no questions asked. Yes, everyone is something! Something they choose to be. You can choose to go forward or stay behind...I'm finally choosing forward because I'm tired of staying behind...I'm finally choosing forward because I'm tired of staying behind in my past of pain. I want to look past all that and into my future. My happy future! Because that's what I'm choosing I choose forward! And I'm never looking back again.

-Sandra

From The Beat: Choices...life is about choices, changes, growing and evolving. The human is the only being in creation that has been given the capacity to choose. All other creatures in creation are locked into a behavior pattern. The human can choose to be moral or immoral-right or wrong, because he or she is the highest creation. Those precious choices we make take us in an assortment of directions. What choices you will make when the old temptations present themselves? To be able to make choices in life is a gift which can become a blessing or a curse. We encourage you to pick a behavior pattern which reflects this great gift, a life that reflects the blessing you were created to be.



There Is Good In Me!

Currently right now I find myself in a hard position trying to do something, anything, at least. Being in here makes you think a lot about life, relationships for one, like considering my last one. It wasn't so good...because one- I let him the guy I was with disrespect me. Why? I'm sure because "I loved him", but also because I thought no other guy would want me. But finally I came to realize that I could do better. Not only that, but I could leave him, and get back to finishing what I started, which was going back to school and maybe there find a guy that would treat me right and be loyal to me.

Considering the fact that I'm in here and I can't do anything, I know when I get out, I'm going to try my best to get in school and prove not only to others, but myself that I can do good, and there is good in me!

-Nicole

From The Beat: What is life, but trial and error! Show me a human being who does not make mistakes. A relationship is not mutual unless there is respect. A healthy sense of self-respect is needed when picking a mate. People treat you the way you treat yourself. Don't try to force life. Put things in priority...school, respect and responsibility. A good person will find you when you do these things.

Making Life Better

I think my life is worth fighting for, because even though I'm in the situation I'm in, at least I know it's gonna get better. Because I'm not gonna stay in here forever. So to me life is worth living. I just have to work on getting my life back on track, so then I could move on throughout my life doing good things, instead of acting stupid. And to me, everybody's life is worth it.

Just work on making life better and it will get that way, so then you could be doing the good and fun things you want to do.

-Briana

From The Beat: Briana, what you are trying to touch upon is the word HOPE. It's a word as old as mankind. Hope can be the motivator we need to do the hard work...getting from where we are to where we want to be. What are your plans to make your life better? To make things better starts with accepting yourself, we wonder how you feel about you.

He Makes Me Better

Every time he looks into my eyes, I rise
I feel better little brother, but he's filled with pride
Since birth I put him first and would never let him trip
His words make me stop red lights from his lips
His love is like chips stacked up
If I ever am the leader, he's gon' be my back up.

-Jonathan

From The Beat: Your brother probably feels as much admiration for you as you do for him. What kind of example are you giving him? Do you want him to grow up and follow in your footsteps? Or has he already chosen his direction? What type of leader will you be and in what direction will you lead in the near future?

Homies

Homies is the ones that's always by your die.
Friends are just there, but homies are down to ride.
You got homies that's real and homies that just fake,
but why is it that the real homies always get taken?
They either die on the streets or get killed in the pen,
but the homies that stick with you for life are the real homies within.

-Ruru

From The Beat: Who's really your homies Ruru? The only homies that are always around when the deal goes down are the ones I see at visiting time...when you need a dime and are there when they know you committed a crime...thinks you're beautiful when everyone else says "you're ugly". Your mom and your dad! These are the homies who gave you life and are more often than not, there for you for life. "Blood is thicker than mud."

Walking Away

I never walked away from anything I've ever got myself into because I thought I would look like a punk. And after I did what was on my mind, I always felt bad about what I just done.

As I got older and my mind developed, I realized that most of the things in life, you have to walk away.

-Isabel

From The Beat: You must have your own value system and not seek to please anyone else at your own expense. Within us is a scale we know or sometimes feel...what is right or wrong. Learning to walk away is developing a sense of what is right at the right time and this involves internal respect and responsibility. We applaud your growth. In order to feel good about ourselves we have to know what is trash and what is treasure. Continue to treasure your life!

NEW MEXICO

Stay Away From The Streets

Stay away from a thug like me,
so you don't end up in a cell half of your teenage life in hell.
Been through some jacked up stuff at one part of my life,
I stay high taking another hit to the brain to release the pain
'cause all I'm smoking is crack cocaine.
I hit the streets trying to make it to another day,
I get on my knees to pray to ask God to help me change my ways.
Two years later I'm clean
from the crack cocaine, and trying not to slang
staying away from the gang.
That started all the pain, so do you hear what I'm saying?
Don't be a 'G' stay in school join a sport
there's better stuff you could get into
instead of pushing someone else's weight.
Figure it out on your own,
but if you want some advice stay away from the streets
unless you're already there, then I don't have nothing else to say.

-Sleepy

From The Beat: We recognize that you've been through a hard time, but nobody put a gun to your head and forced you to pollute your brain. We all go through screwed up stuff in our lives. We can choose to be victims or survivors. Stay off the crack and do something worthwhile in your life.

Pursuing My Dream

When I get older I want to become a singer, and a lyricist. I wrote my first song at five years old, and I've been in many talent shows. I have performed in front of audiences (literally, thousands of people), but I've never tried to pursue my dream.

I've decided I want to start working at it, and I've started taking singing classes.

For college, I'm planning on going to an art school in Illinois. (Chicago's my hometown) I really want to finish what I've started, and I'm going to pursue my dream.

-Taybby

From The Beat: This is good news. Take care of all your legal actions, and find your dream. Just don't forget us at the Beat when you become famous.

The Birth Of My Little Brother

I saw my mom gave birth to my little brother. At first I felt nervous and scared, but when my brother came out it was the best thing in the world, 'giving birth'. But the thing is, after seeing my mom go through that, I think now I'm too scared to have a child of my own.

After all, I guess it's worth it, when they gave my brother to my mom. It was so great to see that and now my brother is a part of our family.

Now my brother is going to be six, and he's the baby of the family.

-Yessica

From The Beat: Birth is one of the greatest experiences anyone could go through. Before you decide to have a child of your own, think long and hard about it, giving birth is one thing but raising a child is a life long event.

Trapped

She touched it once and couldn't let go
 She felt like she could touch the sky
 Little did she know
 Six months later
 She's like a butterfly under the glass
 Beautiful but she's not going anywhere

-Julia

From The Beat: We would like to know what you're referring to. Is it an addiction? Is it a lover? Nonetheless, your poem speaks volumes and makes our minds wonder...

What I think

I think of you day and night
 Hoping you don't leave my sight
 I think of you now and then
 Hoping our relationship would never end
 I think of you holding me
 Saying we will always be
 I think of us holding hands
 Walking in the soothing sand
 I think of us ten years from now
 Seeing our future from now to then

-Rachel

From The Beat: Instead of hoping and thinking of this to come true, make it happen. Remember the choice is always yours.

I Saw

I saw too much for a young lady
 Too much for my mind to handle
 I saw my friend die right in front of me
 I saw him bleeding from every part of his body
 I saw myself holding him
 I saw him looking into my eyes
 I saw that he was scared
 I saw that he now wasn't all there
 He's gone but will never be forgotten

-Michelle

From The Beat: We at The Beat are sorry to hear you had to go through something like this. Now the best you can do is talk about it, and not let it take control of your life.

Having My life!

Growing up with a hard life! Growing up fast! Being around drugs, gang's violence, and growing up having friends or family either addicted to alcoholics or being a gang member.

At one point in my life I thought it was all I knew, all that I could do or be. Being a teen in and out of the D-home, and now I'm going to be 18 in less than half a year.

Now there has come a point in my life where I stop and think is what I want? No! I want to be able to have another chance! A chance to have a normal life, a chance to change, and a chance to show people I can succeed.

I'm tired of being locked up missing out on things, and being giving chances to change and take advantage and fail. I want to be home to be free to be able to live my life the right way. I want to show that I can change and succeed.

-Victoria

From The Beat: We're glad that you realize you've "been given chances to change, take advantage, and fail". Hopefully you haven't depleted your chances of "changing and succeeding". You must be proactive now, before it's too late. We wish you the best of luck.

My Proudest Accomplishment

I'm from the streets and I'm an alcoholic, let alone being a drug addict. Coming to the Juvenile hall almost constantly blocked me from making my dreams come true as being a young teen.

I had so many chances to better myself all on my own, and here in jail, all that's on my mind is "Ya, I'm gonna do good this time, screw the streets everything's gonna change from here on out."

Then when they open the doors to the fresh smell of freedom....damn man....it's a whole different story.

For real. It's easier said than done. That's all my mind frame seems like when I'm locked up.

I was here a few times ago, and I came to church, I was crying, praying, and really in need of strength. So, what was my proudest accomplishment? I was saved! I now have Jesus Christ in my heart, always and forever.

I mean, I still slip, I still drink, runaway, use drugs, gang bang. The same old me, but I know for a true fact that the Lord knows how bad I am doing, and He sends me right back here to where there is safety, a bed, food, water and a roof over my head.

I'm not roaming the streets searching for my next high or drink. He's for real, and to think I just thought the Bible was a book...Now it's my heart.

I understand a lot more nowadays, yes, Jesus is my personal savior and I praise Him with all my heart.

I make my grandma very proud, I love it, and I'm a changed person. God bless all of you, He really does love us. So, I'd have to say this was my proudest accomplishments accepting Jesus Christ.

-Tweety

From the Beat: It's good that you have found the Lord, but it's confusing on how you say you "slip". It almost sounds like you're using "the Lord" as an excuse to "drink, run away, use drugs, and gang bang". You need to get the help you need and stop making excuses before it's too late and you don't make it to a safe place.



Joinin' The US Military

I have thought of joinin' the military, one of the most important reasons is to become a better person and to better my life. I think bein' in the Air Force would give me a lot of discipline, and I think I need the discipline 'cause I don't get the discipline I need and that's why I act the way I act.

I also think the Air Force would be good cause I would get the discipline I need to control my anger. I would like to join the Air Force because it would give me a great lifetime career and teach me a lot of new and awarding things. The Air Force would set me for life and make me a happier person.

-Smiles

From The Beat: We believe that while joining the Air Force would certainly be beneficial to you, you also need to find some work yourself. The Air Force can't do all the work for you - you must apply positive changes in your life. We hope you strive to do your best and make it to the Air Force.

Busquemos Lo Mejor

Yo pienso que tengo que cambiar porque el camino que llevo no es correcto. Ya estoy cansado de venir aquí.

Ahorita que salga, pues voy a cumplir 18 años y si vuelvo aquí voy a para en la 850 Brayan.

Yo les doy el consejo a todos los jovenes que estan aquí de Honduras, porque la mayoría son de Honduras. Tenemos que cambiar y buscar un trabajo legal.

Miremos a nuestras madres como sufren allá cuando estamos presos. No importa que ganemos poco, pero sin miedo a que nos agarren vendiendo drogas.

From The Beat: Es verdad, despues de tener 18 años, no vas a volver a para aqui mas que a otro lugar diferente y más serio. Las cosas cambian. El consejo que nos has dado nos gusto mucho. Es mejor tener un trabajo que de menos dinero, que un trabajo ilegal que cualquier día lo puedes perder y mucho más.

Let's Search For The Best

I think I have to change because the raod I'm walking on is not a correct one. I'm tired of coming here.

Whe I get out, I'll turned 18 years old and if I come back, I'm going to 850 Bryant (county jail).

I'm going to give an advice to all young people who are here from Honduras, because the majority are from Honduras. We have to change and look for a legal job. Let's take a look at our mothers how they suffer over there when we are locked up. It shouldn't matter if we gain less money, but we won't risk ourselves to get caught by selling drugs.

-Tavo, San Francisco

From The Beat: That's right, after 18 years old, you won't come back here but to a different and more serious place. Things changes. We like your advice. It's better to have a legal job that can asure to give little money than another one that can make you lose so much.

Sí, Solo Hay Una Vida

Yo lo que creo es que sí hay una otra vida que es mejor que esta, pero todo depende de como se porte con los demás. Si uno anda en cosas malas y no rectifica a tiempo, su camnino le va a ir mal.

Cando se encuentre en el cielo, le vas a decir al Señor lo que tú hicistes por los demás, si le distes una mano cuando la necesitaban.

Pero si uno cambia su camino, tendrá grandes cosas para uno. Por eso quiero cambiar para que mi familia se sienta orgulloso de mí, pero especialmente para que el Señor tenga grandes cosas para mí.

From The Beat: ¿Cuales son esas cosas que Dios nos dará si hacemos las cosas bien? Dinosla porque nosotros no sabemos. ¿Y tú como has pensado en hacer tu vida? ¿Que es lo que tenemos que hacer para cambiar nuestro camino?

Yes, There Is Only One Life

I believe that there is another better life after this one, but it all depends you how live this one. If you are into bad things and don't rectify on time, your road will go very bad.

When you go to Heaven, you will have to tell the Lord what you did for others, and if you handed a hand to those who needed it.

But if you change your path, you will have huge thins in your life. That's why I want to change so my family would be proud of me, but especially to get big things from God.

-Juan San Francisco

From The Beat: What are those things that God will grant us if we do right? Please tell us, we need to know. How are you going to live your life? What do we have to do to change our path?

Disculpas

Yo creo que uno debe pedir disculpa cuando uno se equivocal o haya ofendido a alguien mayor que uno o que se merezca una disculpa. Pero hay personas que no se merecen disculpas.

Yo solo le pido disculpa a mi madre, y no sé si los demás lo haran también.

Le pido perdón a Dios y a mi madre que me perdone todo lo malo que he hecho por portarme mal en la vida.

Aveses pienso que lo que vivi fue parte de mi destino.

Por eso a cualquier homie que lea estas lineas, les quiero decir que si sienten el deseo de camabiar, que lo hagan por su propio bien para que ya no hagan sufrir a sus madres. Cuidenla mucho, valorenla, amenla, y que todo lo bueno lo hagan por ella, y amenla mucho.

From The Beat: Gracias port us palabras en este tema. Esperamo que de verdad puedas cambiar tu vida y poder valorar a tu madre como se debe. ¿Quienes no se merecen disculpas? ¿Por qué dijistes eso?

Apologies

I think we have to apologize when we make a mistake, or after offending someone older than we are or someone who deserves an apology. However, there are people who don't deserve an apology.

I just ask my mother to forgive me and I don't know if others do the same thing I do as well.

I ask God and my mother to forgive me for all the wrong I've done and for behaving bad in life.

Sometimes I think that what I did was part of my destiny. That's why I want to warn any homeboy who can read this lines, that if you have the desires of changing to do it for their own good so they can stop making their mother from suffering. Take care of them, value them, love them, and do the best for them.

-Anderson, San Francisco

From The Beat: Thanks for your words about this topic. We hope you find a way to change your life and to value your mothers like you should. How do we know who doesn't deserves apologies? Who doesn't deserve them? What make you say that?



Para Mi Futuro

Pienso que ahora si aprendí la lección. Que onda mi gente! Aquí estoy otra vez contandoles algo de mis sentimientos, mis pensamientos, y mis planes para el futuro.

En esta ocasion, les quiero contar que es lo que pasa por mi mente cuando me pongo a pensar en todo lo que perdi. No solo pienso en lo material sino en mi familia, todo lo que estoy sufriendo, y lo más importante, el dolor que le estoy causando a mi seres queridos.

Cuando platico con los homies aqui adentro, ellos me dicen que me imaginen de todos los parties que estoy perdiendo, con cuantas janas no me hubiera metido en todo este tiempo que he estado aqui, o si no cuantas loqueras nome hubiera puesto.

Entonces yo me pongo a pensar que esas cosas son las cosas que les preocupan a ellos y las comparo con las cosas que me preocupan a mí y llego a la conclusion que lo más importante es los momentos felices que pudistes pasar con tu familia, ya sean tus padres, hermanos, esposas, o hijos.

Otra cosa muy importante es la libertad. Es por eso que cuando pienso en eso, me propongo a mi mismo y me digo que desde hoy en adelante tengo que hacer todo lo possible para ser una persona de bien, para no volver a cometer una estupidez de nuevo y no perder mi tiempo.

From The Beat: Hay muchas cosas que podemos perder en nuestras vidas que son muy importante. Esperamos que te propongas buenas metas para que puedas realizar todos tus sueños y ser una persona mejor. Nos da mucho gusto que te hayas dado cuenta lo que realmente es importante en la vida. Hay mejores cosas en la vida que disfrutar que vivir que estar deprivado de nuestra LIBERTAD.

For My Future

I think I did learn my lesson. What's up my people! Here I am again sharing something about my feelings, my thoughts and my plans for the future.

In this occasion, I want to share with you what's going through my head about what I lost. I don't just think about the material stuff, I also think about my family, all I am suffering, and the most important thing is about the pain I am causing my loved ones.

When I talk to my homies in here, they tell me to imagine how many parties I am missing, how many jainas I could have been all this time I've been here, and how many high I could have enjoyed.

I think about the things they worry about and what I worry about, I compare them, and I come to the conclusion that the most important moment in life is what you spend with your family like your father, brothers, wife, kids.

Another most important thing is freedom. That's why when I think about it, I propose to myself to move on with life, to do the best as possible to be a better person to never do the same stupid things again, and not waste my time.

-Niño, Santa Clara

From The Beat: There are many things we can loose in our lives that are very important. We hope you come up with good propositions and goals to make your dream a reality and become a better person. It makes us happy knowing that you've realized how important life is. There are better things in life to enjoy than being without the right of enjoying our freedom.

Mis Pensamientos De Los Temas

Yo una vez le pedi perdón ami hermana porque no le obedecer lo que me dijo que hiciera. Aveses es bueno recapacitar cuando uno comete errores.

Tal vez si pudiera volver a pedir perdón a alguien lo haría, pero que la persona tubiera la razón y esta correcto.

Si hubiera una sola vida, lo único que pidiera es estar con mi madresita y m familia para pasarla como una familia feliz.

La primera vez que me senti orgulloso fue cuando miré a mi hermana y seré feliz porque sé que estaré con ella hasta el fin.

From The Beat: Estas en lo cierto. Siempre es bueno disculparse cuando uno comete un error. Esperamos que hagas lo correcto y te portes bien con tu hermana y tu madre quienes han estado contigo por mucho tiempo. Se merece mucho más que esto.

My Thoughts About The Topics

I asked for forgiveness to my sister for not listening to what she asked me to do. Sometimes it's good to reflect over the mistakes we make.

Maybe if I had to ask for forginess to someone I would do it, but if this person is right and deserves it.

If there was only one life, the only thing I ask for is to be with my mother and my family to spend it like a happy family.

The first thing I feel proud was when I saw my sister, and I will be happy as long as I be with her until the end.

-Hector, San Francisco

From The Beat: You're right. It's always better to apologize when making a mistake to someone. We hope you make things right and to start behaving better for your mother who has always been there for you. She deserves much more than this.

Lo Siento Primo

Sí solo hubiera una vida quizas todos viviríamos diferente porque sabemos que solo es esta vida.

La muerte de mi primo me ha cambiado la vida. Se fue hace unos años. Me ha dolido mucho. Siempre lo llevaré en el corazón hasta la muerte.

El me enseñó a ser valiente. El era mi mejor amigo y era mi primo. Siempre lo recuerdo. Me da dolor en el corazón la muerte de mi primo. Fue muy doloroso. Me dijo que en todo momento lo recordara hasta que muriera. Lo siento. Hasta la muerte de corazón al jomito.

From The Beat: Sentimos que te debas sentir mal por lo que le pasó a tu primo. Tienes que darte cuenta de la realidad y la realidad es que nadie nacio para vivir para siempre. Todos algún día vamos a irnos de la misma manera como venimos. Todavía estas vivo. Piensa en eso. Donde quiera que él esté, le deseamos un gran descanso en paz.

Sorry

If there were only one life, we would live differently because we would know that there is only one life.

The death of my cousin has changed my life. It happened a few years ago. It has hurt me so bad. I'll always keep him in my heart until my death comes.

He taught me to be brave. He was my best friend and my cousin. I always remember him. It was very painful. He told me to remember him at all moments until death. I'm sorry. Untill death comes, my jomito.

-Dixon, Alameda

From The Beat: We understand that you might feel bad because of what happened with your cousin. You need to realize the reality, and the reality is that nobody was born to live forever. We all are going to leave like he did one day the same way we came. You're still alive. Think about this. Wherever he is, RIP, and strive for a long positive life!!

The death of my cousin has changed my life. It happened a few years ago. It has hurt me so bad.

Es A Dios

Hace mucho tiempo, le pedi disculpa a alguien por haberle fallado. Le pedi perdón porque le había porque le había irrespetado.

Necesito pedirle disculpa a Dios porque muchas veces le he fallado en muchas cosas. Es a El a quien le tienes que pedir perdón porque El es quien nos Dió la vida y nos ayudo en cada momento de nuestras vidas.

From The Beat: ¿Ahora que te has dado cuenta de tus fallas, ha cambiado tu forma de pensar sobre las cosas que haces? Esperamos y que Dios te llegue a perdonar y haga crecer tu fe en El para poder hacer las cosas mejor.

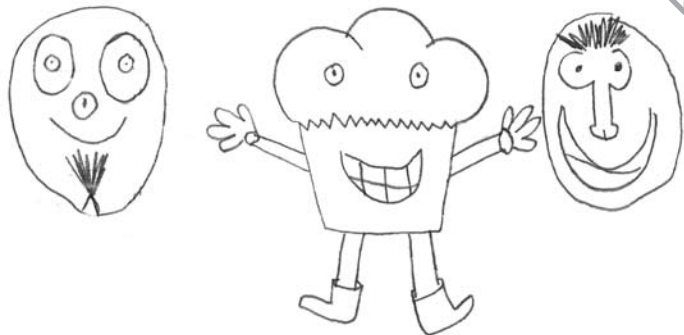
To God

I ask for an apology to someone because I failed this person. I asked him for forgiveness because I irrespeted him.

I need to ask God for forgiveness because I've failed Him in many things. Is Him who you should apologize to because He was the one who gave us life and help us in every moment of our lives.

-Jose, San Francisco

From The Beat: Now that you have realized your mistakes, have your way of thinking changed about the things you do? We hope God forgive you and give you the faith you need to believe in him to do things better.



Pidiendo Perdón

La última vez que pedi disculpa fue hace 7 meses a un amigo. Y pido disculpa porque me siento egoísta conmigo y no deja dormir tranquilo.

Yo le he pedido perdón a Dios porque Dios si perdona y de verdad de corazón y no como algunas personas que dicen que perdonan, pero no lo hacen de corazón. A mí no me da pena pedirle perdón a Dios.

From The Beat: Que bien que no seas de esas personas que no le gusta pedir perdón. ¿Crees que te debes una disculpa a ti mismo por la situación que te has metido?

Asking For Forgiveness

The last time I asked for forgiveness was seven years ago to a friend. I asked for forgiveness because it makes me feel selfish and I can't sleep.

I asked God for forgiveness because God forgives with His heart and not like other people who say that they forgive, by don't do it with the heart. I'm not ashamed to ask God to forgive me.

-Jose, San Francisco

From The Beat: It's a good thing that you're not like those people who don't like to apologize. Do you think you owe yourself an apology for the situation you find yourself in?

Mi Decisión

Cuando era niño, siempre soñaba con venir a los Estados Unidos porque mi sueño siempre ha sido tener una casa, un Hummer del 2009. Por eso me vine para este país. Por los momentos, mis sueños se han venido abajo.

Siempre también he soñado desde que era un niño por tener un mañana mejor con mi madre. Siempre he querido ayudarla porque ella nunca tubo alguien quien la ayudara.

Antes de nacer, ellos se separaron. Y cuando estaba en el colegio, mi papa falleció y fue ahí cuando decidí salir del colegio y venirle a los Estados Unidos para un mejor futuro. Ahora me encuentro en esta celda solo piensa en mi madre que quedo tan solita.

Le pido a mi Diosito que me tenga a mi madre con salud porque no puedo hacer nada en esta celda. Le pido a Dios que me ayude a mi familia también le pido por mis sueños.

From The Beat: Sentimos mucho la pérdida de tu padre. Entendemos que hayas venido aquí por una gran razón, y lo lograstes, pero no has sabido haber hecho las cosas bien. Si hiscstes el gran esfuerzo de venirte aquí por un futuro mejor, deberías de luchar fuerte para que sea un futuro mejor y no emperarlo. Recuerda que tienes una persona quien necesita de tu ayudar y mucho.

My Decision

When I was a kid, I always dreamt to come to the United States because my dream was to own a house, and a 2009 Hummer. That's why I came to this country. As for right now, my dreams have gone down.

I've also always dreamed to, since I was very young, to have a better tomorrow for my mother. I've always wanted to help her because she never someone to support her.

Before I was born, my parents separated. When I was in school, my dad died and that's when I decided to leave school and to come to the US for a better future. Now I find myself in this place alone and think about my mom who is alone.

I ask God to keep my mother healthy because I can't do anything in this cell. I ask God to help my family and I also ask Him for my dream.

-Rudis, San Francisco

From The Beat: We are sorry for your father's loss. We understand that you came here for a big reason and you made it, but you haven't done things right. If you made a big effort to come here for a better future, you should fight hard to make a better future and not make worse. Remember that you have a person who need your help and much more.

Cosas Que Hacemos

Siempre hacemos cosas que nos da pena o no queremos ni decir las cosas que hacemos. Hay cosas que hacemos que nos hace sentir bien orgullosos, te hace sentir feliz y te ayuda a seguir adelante con una vida positiva.

From The Beat: ¿Alguna vez has hecho algo que te haya hecho sentir orgulloso de ti? ¿Has pensado hacer alguna de esas cosas positiva?

Things We Do

We always do things we are ashamed of, and we don't even want to say what we do. There are things we do that make feel proud, that makes feel happy and help us to continue to live life with a positive road.

-Hector, San Francisco

From The Beat: Have you ever done something that have made you feel proud? Have you thought about making any of those positive moves?

The Safest Place Is Heaven

I think the safest place is heaven. The reason why I chose this topic is because there is no safe place you can go to except for the sky. All the drama with people and cars or money is gone. There's peace and love, no hurt in heaven.

So whenever I want to retire from all the pain and suffering, I would wait until my time so I can relax and feel safe in the safest place. The sky is my only limit. And I'm going to make it one day.

-Smokey

From The Beat: It makes us sad to think that you cannot find any real peace right here on earth. But, like you, we get comfort from thinking about the peace that lies waiting for us at the end.

The Past

The past is something I can never go back to
Because if I could I would make every lie true

I know I should have not kicked it with my little crew
I only did it because I was bored and had nothing to do

Now it's too late, 'cause look where I'm at

Like my brothers say, "Where you sit, that's where I sat"

Thinking back I now know what they meant by that

But I kept saying to myself, "I'm not going back"

I'm truly blessed to have four brothers that care for me

Because if I didn't, God knows where I would be

Maybe another victim that dies on the street

Or that got his blunt laced while smoking weed

Thursday 7/9 was my mom's birthday, and I'm in here

I would have probably been out there drinking beer

Ripped as hell, feeling real emotional, then comes the tears

-Lil' Chapa

From The Beat: We hope you take full advantage of the blessing of four brothers supporting and loving you so that the tears that come are tears of joy and not of pain. Now, we'd love to see you put your skills to work on a poem called, "The Future."

Rest In Peace, Daddy

June 2, '68-May 23, '08

Rest in peace, because you were always there for me

Rest in peace, because your soul should be set free

Rest in peace, because I want you to watch over me

Rest in peace, because you are the other part of me

-Molly

From The Beat: This as is one of the sweetest RIPs we have ever read in The Beat. Now, you must live a long and free life to keep his memory alive.

My Whole House Is My Sanctuary

The safest place for me in the whole world would be my house. And not just my room, but my whole house. I feel safe there because there are no strangers there, just people I love and people that love me. A few people come to my house, but it's people I know and trust.

There have only been a few times where I was uncomfortable at my house. One time was when the cops came into my house, kicked me out of my room and searched the whole room. They were disrespectful and they made a mess going through my dressers.

-Jesse

From The Beat: We're not only glad that your house is your safe place, but that you have the great ability to express your feelings — even frustration with how the police treated your family — clearly and respectfully. We hope you are keeping your own daily journal of what you're going through (in and out of the hall) because you have powers of observation and self-expression that could lead to an interesting book in ten years...

Home Is Not Here

Home is where the bird whistles and the dog barks. Home is where the door is open and the atmosphere is warm. At night the fire crackles and the sparks fly and the kettle boils. The steam rises from the cup and the sugar pours like liquid silk.

The TV's on and everyone's watching. But no one is watching me, and I am lost in the deep dark abyss that is my mind. I am no longer happy. I awake but it is as I thought; my nightmare is true. I am dead inside. Now all I feel is the cold stone-like bracelets that lock both my wrists and fate.

I feel my mind go completely blank, and my heart sink and my stomach tighten. I hear the laughs of my peers and the whimper of my guardians. My tears fall to the ground in a splash no one can hear. Even the crickets in the bush lay quiet. I am put in the carriage of justice and we flee from the place I was raised.

And still my tears fall like the rain from the sky. I look out the window. It feels like everyone is still. I am still. I surrender to what now will succumb me.

-Ian

From The Beat: In this very moving piece, you have captured that moment when everything changes — from the sweet warmth of home and family to the cold reality of where you wrote this fine piece. The strength you bring to this writing tells us that you have the strength to overcome this temporary setback. This will hurt you, but not "succumb" you — and whatever doesn't kill you will make you stronger. Don't surrender to this place. In the words of the poet Robert Frost, you have "miles to go before you sleep."

The Sanctuary Of The Cemetery

The safest place for me is the cemetery where I smoke and visit my cousin because it feels so quiet and calm even though we took another loss to the madness of the streets.

Every time I visit him I feel so calm, and I just think and let my mind travel. I will stay there for an hour or two bumping into other family members and homies. And it will also depend on how far my mind goes. Oohoh and Armone, Rest In Paradise.

-Raw B

From The Beat: We can picture you there, finding peace among the gravestones, thinking about your cousins. We're sorry for your loss.

Locked Up

Being locked up takes away time from your life. The time you are doing locked up, you could be doing something else in the outs. Something good, by the way. Not just go drink and kick it with your homeboys.

I'm almost getting out of this institution. I've been here for four months already, and I'm tired of it. It's getting old coming to the same four white walls. I have something to do when I get out. I actually have to do a lot of things.

I got to work to earn my money and help out in the family, you know. I also would go to school and do good. You might be thinking that I'm just talking right now, but deep inside I know I'm really going to do these things so that way I'll stay occupied so I won't have time to do dumb things.

-Moko

From The Beat: You said it as clearly as it could be said: this is a waist of time. We know you can do what you set your mind to, and you know it too, so forget what anyone else tells you. Just remember what you went through and what you wrote about it, and keep your promises to yourself.

Pain Is Love?!

Baby's crying, women screaming
 Youth dying, people bleeding
 Take a shank, to the heart
 Not enough but it's a start
 Carve your lover's name? Not enough
 Bat to the ribs? That's real love.
 Take a knife in the arm
 It's all for love! Don't mean no harm
 Broken limbs, even paralyzed
 Now you can't see eye to eye
 Take a bullet to the head
 In a daze look at the blood you've shed
 Pain is love... or so it's said
 But how much pain before you're dead?

-Reesie Cup

From The Beat: It hurts to know that anyone should have to experience the things you drew on for this scary poem, especially someone as young as you (and so many others). The only silver lining we can find is that from such pain sometimes comes great art.

How Do You Say Sorry?

How do you say sorry to a little sister who loves you?
 How do you say sorry to twelve years of messed up life
 and bad treatment?

How do you say sorry for being a messed up sister?
 My little sister looks up to me. She thinks I'm the best
 person in the world.

I wish I could tell you, "I love you," and say, "Sorry" for
 all the messed-up things I've said and done. I love you to
 death. You're my little sister. When I get out, I promise
 I'ma be a better sister to you. No more, I promise.

How do you say, "Sorry"?

-LaLa

From The Beat: We think you answered your own question, LaLa. The way you say you're sorry for 12 years of "messed up life" is to give your loving little sister the next 12 years dedicated to her. Don't do anything you wouldn't want her to do, because she'll always follow what you do. Be the true big sister she needs, and that will be all the "I'm sorry" you need.

Where You From?

I think that most of what I say is just so deep
 That people have no choice but to listen when I speak
 There's no way around it. When I talk I have the floor
 And if you don't like it I'll gladly show you the door
 You don't like the way I write? Maybe you should turn
 the page

Oh am I being rude? I didn't tell you my name
 They call me Reesie somethin' Cupzz the age is 16
 Occupation? Well I just know how to do me
 Location? East Palo Alto California
 Disrespect where I'm from I'ma simply ignore ya
 'Cause if you think about it what has EPA done for me?
 Took a father figure from me, other friends and family
 EPA has made me who I am today
 So I guess that's a plus-minus, look at it either way
 But that 2.5 ain't worth dyin' for
 The agony, pain, blood shed, tears and more
 It ain't about where you from, it's about where you going
 Throwin' it up looks hard, but your ignorance is
 showing

-Reesie Cup

From The Beat: You are so right, it's all about where you're going. There will always be a lot of ignorant people around, so don't let them decide who you will be.

Miss Dopey

You my world
 The one and only special girl
 That I have been looking for
 I want to save you for myself
 I promise girl I'll never creep with no one else
 Save you from the track
 You got me on Nikes, I'm knowing how to act
 The homies told me paper or plastic and I let them know
 you got me double wrapped
 I'm your wubby dubby pooh butt
 And I'll let all the readers of The Beat Within know
 what's up
 I don't care if you been through it all girl I'm gone back you up
 Through it all, what you say goes
 I don't mail nothing unless you know
 You the quarterback on my team
 So off top I'm gone block at all means
 The love you have showed me is what I'm missin'
 You have me on this natural high
 My mind do like my skateboard wheels, it just keeps
 spinning.
 You and me is all I dream of
 Spending the rest of my life with you is how I want it
 If you don't like my gang banging then I'll drop it
 But like you said, let's keep things slow, I'll be yo' turtle
 Damn! You really got me and it's showing
 I be up late crying without no one knowing
 I love you... Was you knowing?
 Every super woman needs a super man
 Here I am
 I'll cash you out no worries you can live with me
 I refused to let them monstas take you in circles when I
 can have you live the good life with me
 Even though I don't know how to really read
 You still write to yo' Dopey
 You are my first, my last, you are my everything —
 My "Princess V" as I'm your Prince Dopey
 I say I'm gangsta in the Hall to all the homies
 But really I'm just yo' cuddly Dopey doll and my front's
 a phony
 Damn, baby, you got me feelin' shhhh I ain't never felt
 before
 You the only one who really knows me
 When you away I feel depressed
 And I'm a mess
 It's like that same feelin' I used to get when my pizo had
 nothing left
 No more meth
 I'm leaving the game like a retired ref
 For you
 You make me better
 Quitting smoking, gangbanging and drinking, it's all
 "whatever"
 I hope with this said you will always love me forever and ever
 And never let me go in bad weather
 Be down with yo' man and hold his hand forever
 Until we can be together
 I will always write you love letters

-Wubby Dopey Pooh

From The Beat: Do you believe in the old saying, "Love conquers all?" If you keep the promises to quit smoking, banging and drinking, then you will have conquered a whole lot with love. And what do you mean you "don't know how to really read?" Anyone who can write such a beautiful poem should be reading a book a week! This is so much more than a love poem; it's also a declaration of independence that doesn't need to wait for the approval of anyone. Now, let your deeds equal your wonderful words!

My Mamma

Sometimes, when I'm in my cell, it hurts me to just think about how my mom feels. I love my mom and I haven't noticed how much I hurt my mom by not listening to her.

Everybody tells me that I'm going to kill my mom—they mean by her health. She has high blood pressure and diabetes. Ever since I stopped listening to her, her health got worse. At any time my mom' sugar goes too high, she can fall into a coma. My mom can be on the road when that happens, or anywhere, and it scares me. I don't think it would be this bad if I just listened to her.

God really is helping me to understand why I should obey my mom... good things happen. Bad things happen when you don't, like being in juvenile hall.

-Shari

From The Beat: The truth is, Shari, that you owe your mom the basic respect of listening to her even if she were not sick. We don't think you're responsible for her being sick, but we know you could make her feel a lot better. Try to think that she's been your age but you haven't been hers, so she's learned some things through experience, just as you have. This is a beautiful apology and promise, and we hope you have all the support and luck you need to make it come true.

She has high blood pressure and diabetes. Ever since I stopped listening to her, her health got worse.

My Life Behind The Door With No Knob

I'm sick of this life of mine

I wish everything could just be fine

I know that there's people on the streets

That are doin' way worse than me

But I still be layin' here wishin' to be set free...

As I sit here day by day

Lookin' at these walls

Watchin' the paint fade away

And getting sick of being watched

24 hours a day

No privacy

Not even to pray

No roommate

Which means no play

All there is

Is

Ladies this!

Ladies that!

But really we're just kids stuck in this trap

And that's for a fact

But to them we're just criminals

That need to be here

But I feel that

If they would just show us they care

Then maybe, just maybe, we wouldn't end up here

Year after year

But throughout these years

There's still no care

And my mind is still everywhere...

-Gee

From The Beat: You can never expect strangers to care for you as much as you must care for yourself! Of course it feels like a trap in here, because you don't have freedom to make your own decisions. Yes, you are just a kid whose made mistakes, but it's time to make adult choices, which often means sacrificing what you like in the sort run for a far more promising future in the long run. Focus that mind of yours on the task at hand, and there's no doubt you can get to where you want to be.

Gone In The Wind

I lost her

Because of our betrayal

I lost her

'Cause I got put in jail

I lost her

And now it feels like I failed

I wish I could take everything back

And show her

I will always have her back

No matter what

I will always love her

No matter what

I will always show my love towards her

No matter what I don't give a what's up

I know she wants

Me back

But, shhh, how do I know

She won't go again behind my back

It sucks to have doubts

About the person you love

But, shhh, what's love

When you can't even hug

I miss her so bad

I bet she's not glad

That I'm in here, all sad

But if she wanted me that bad

She wouldn't have went and did that

But I can't say anything

'Cause I did it too

But it sucks when it's you

I love her

I really do

I wish I could show her

How much it is true

But by the time I get done

With my time

She'll be gone in the wind

And I would've already run out of time

So this is my good-bye

I love you and stay high

-Gee

From The Beat: This is what it means to have the shoe on the other foot. You are feeling the pain of betrayal, just as she has felt it. This is part of growing up, though a very painful part. Just remember that there are consequences to everything we do (and everything we don't do), and that some of those consequences can last a lifetime. Pain can be a great teacher.

I Can Be

I can be the most intelligent person you'd ever meet

I can also be an ass, act ignorant in the street

I can be the girl that everyone loves to love

I can also be that girl no one's mom approves of

I can be the one that says, "It ain't worth it, don't fight"

I can also mess somebody up if you piss me off right

I can be the teacher's pet, listen to all the rules

I can also be the class clown, thrown out of school

I can be such a lady with so much potential

I can also be rude, grimy, and disrespectful

I think I have a few loose bolts, but yet I have the tools

I can be so many times at times, I'm just confused

-Reesie Cup

From The Beat: Of course you're confused; you're a teenager! Life's confusing! Give yourself a break. Now, as for those loose bolts, why not use those tools to tighten them up?

Can You Feel It?

Can you feel it, Beat? I could feel it
For all my homies in the halls to the Y
Can y'all feel it?
For all my OG patnas in county or the pen
Can y'all feel this?
'Cause I could feel it!

I'm trying to live vividly, trying to stay intense
I keep it stoic and serene, 'cause I'm calm under stress What's
next? The sounds of my breath
Make rhymes seem sleeker
A lyricist, an elocutionist, a public speaker
I'm going long distance, rockin' fortitude and strength Don't
know the destination, but I know I go the length Dodging
obstacles in my path, jumping over hurdles
Linear and straight-forward, never runnin' in circles
I evade those who chase me, they're motionless like stasis Their
semblance, their visages and their faces
Betray their trepidation and betray their dismay
They fear and they worry 'cause they don't know the way
I know the way! Me and my boys trailblazing
Doing it first, initiating
Like revolutionary souljas who are Mexican
We're catalysts for your enlightenment and your illumination
The rebirth, the Mexican Revolution, we're generatin'
I be in the state of mind, I'm stuck, I'm so high
I can't be reached by a freakin' satellite
I amplify, aliens can hear my rhymes in the sky
I alienate those who don't like the volume too high
They say we are a little eccentric, a little outside the norm So in a
crowd of the same people, you couldn't discern our form
Make it out like teens in home basements
My rhymes are gold so don't hate 'cause
I come sick wit' it, I embellish
I need no replacement! You're just envious and jealous
Now everybody act like an oscillation fan
And wave back and forth with your lighter in your hand Now,
manuals could be where you look for instruction
I just flip through magazines for tips on seduction
But manual comes from the French word for hands
So every young lady and man must clap their hands!

Come on clap, come on y'all clap your hands!
Can you feel it Beat? I could feel it
For all my homies in the halls to the Y
Can y'all feel it?
For all my OG patnas in county or the pen
Can y'all feel this?
'Cause I could feel it!

I'm the hero of this song, the protagonist
Spittin' lyrics like graffiti

So I'm taggin' this the apex, the pinnacle, also the zenith
We're at the top of the charts, and the world is beneath us
We're talking about expanding, but I have no attention
I'm digressin'... Could you please repeat the question?
I preserve the flavor of liquor in a bottle
I preserve my wealth 'cause I never play lotto
Rap is universal, pervading galaxies, plus
The whole world can listen
And relate back to me; never neglect the air you're breathing
Pay attention to the sun and the season
'Cause homeboy, there's a reason
I'm both concave and convex like the moon and its crescents
I'm the state of being quiet, like quiescence
Full of talents, I'm never tacit 'cause I hate silence
I don't tip off the rope, I stay balanced
Not back and forth, not forth and back
Spit a peach optimo and smoke me a fat sack
Of grapes so I could feel famished, I better find me a snack
If my throat's parched, I need something to wet it
Pop a pull and chug some orange juice so I could lubricate my
tongue and spit full credit
For all the critics in the house who offer criticism
Who judge The Beat, my raw flows and my lyricism
You can analyze me, examine me critically
But I suggest you try to compete with me
That won't be easy, if you antagonize me
You provoke hostility in me, enmity, mutual, deep-seated hatred
It's the king of things that must be abated
Lessened or avoided, what I have to abstain from
Pop goes the weasel or the tarts in your toaster
Up and down like vicissitudes or a roller coaster
I think we're supposed to reach a consensus, an agreement But
what I call concrete, you call the cement!
So I spoke some real game so there shouldn't be no
disagreement!

Come on clap y'all, come on clap your hands!
Can you feel it, Beat? I could feel it
For all my homies in the halls to the Y
Can y'all feel it?
For all my OG patnas in county or the pen
Can y'all feel this?
'Cause I could feel it!
I could feel it!

-Lil Teekstero
From The Beat: There is so much we love about this magnum opus (which is Latin for great work!). Not only does it teach real information, things we didn't know, it uses some of the most original and creative rhyme schemes we've seen in the raps we publish (like rhyming "the moon and its crescents" with "quiet, like quiescence." Brilliant!) The destination is unknown to us all, except of course, the inevitable end. But it's the journey that defines a life, not the destination. When we read your passionate and exciting rap, we get the feeling that you're on a journey that has just come to a fork in the road, and that you're determined to take the path that leads away from where you've been and towards the great unknown. Yeah, we feel it. There's a wind at your back, and we definitely feel it.

Alive And Living

I believe if national heroes such as MLK, JFK, Malcolm X, and Cesar Chavez were still alive, this world wouldn't be the way it is. Their influence would be positive and very breathtaking. These are people who fought for civil rights, fought to protect the things people take for granted nowadays.

These people made a difference. They were making a change to bring our people together. That's why they had to die. Do you think it was a coincidence that they were all killed, with the exception of Cesar Chavez? Natural causes beat the government to it.

If they were all still here, no, they wouldn't be impressed, I believe they would be disgusted to see how things have changed.

-Freddy

From The Beat: As usual, Freddy, you have taken the subject seriously and given a thoughtful, well written answer. Tragically, we agree with every word. So, it seems it's time for a new leader for a new time. As the title character asked each newborn baby in The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman, "Is you the one? Is you the one?"

Coming Into Juvie

I'm about to write about Juvie and how they treat you here. Well, when you get caught by the police because you did something bad, they bring you in to the booking place because they want to get your information and find out why you are coming to Juvie.

Then after that when they have all your information, they take you to a room, where they tell you that you're going to have to take a shower and then put on your Juvie clothes. Then when you change into your- Juvie clothes, you put your clothes that you were wearing into a bag that they give you.

Then after that they tell you that if you want to you can call your mom and you can say yes or no. If you say yes, then they will let you. So then after that, they give you your stuff that you're going to take to your unit, like your tooth brush, soap, blankets, and other things.

-Saul

From The Beat: Thank you, Saul, for laying this out for us. It's clear and complete, and now we have a much better sense of what happens to a young person who's picked up and taken here. What happens at the other end when they discharge you?

My Mistake

"Today I felt the need to let my feelings bleed." I want to say a few words in the hopes of reaching a youngsta! I'm 23 now sitting in the pen. Been in and out of Juvi, YA, camp, all since a young teen. I won't lecture because I've sat where you're sitting.

But I'd like to say, we all make mistakes. Mine? "Banging, slanging, making my fame. Now all I feel is shame. I should've changed my game up while I had a chance instead of pushing without a back glance." Take it from an OG it isn't nothing worth your freedom. Take any chance given to you and run with it. I wish I had. Stay strong and true to yourself. All the Fame and a name fades.

Our next writer is writing to us from a Women's Correctional Facility in Chowchilla, Ca. C. Payne aka Joker, who has introduced herself as a someone who has been acquainted with the system real well. She's been through what a lot of you young readers/writers out there are going through. She's been in the game trying to make a name for herself, but now she has realized that it hasn't gotten her nowhere except in a small cell far away from her loved ones. So Joker writes with intentions on trying to reach out to some of you that may be headed in the same path she was. So listen up to Joker's words of advice.

I should've changed my game up while I had a chance instead of pushing without a back glance.

To My Father

Dad why did you leave me? But not just me, but the whole family. I feel as it was my fault for you to pull that trigger. You and I had the best times. We would always hang out together, drive together, work on the car together, and go to jobs together. You left behind many great things. You were my supporter. I went to you for help or when I needed advice. I know we weren't living the great life. We were in debt, couldn't pay for rent, and had no play money.

When you left I knew I had to be the man of the house. I had to take over the business you had. But I had no license and I was under age. You even missed my 16th birthday. I still tried my hardest to keep us above ground, under a roof, food on the table, and shoes and clothes. I made the money. I still drove without a license. But that wasn't enough. Mom was still an alcoholic and she still abused alcohol. But still I tried to be the man of the house. I was to a point. I made the money as much as I could. But I couldn't take it. I wasn't going to school, wasn't getting an education, the things I wanted to do was to go see my girl and friends.

The truck didn't last long. It was the only quick transportation. When it broke down, I knew I couldn't do it anymore. So then I finally went to school and that same day I get booked in. My PO booked me in because no one could take care of me. Dad, I'm sorry. I should of respected and listened to you more and yet I still had mom left. She passed forty-nine days later.

After you passed away now I'm in juvenile hall with nowhere to go and 10 charges on my shoulder that came out of nowhere. Dad, mom, may you both REST IN PEACE together. You both are in a better place. I'm sorry. I'm going to change, I want you both proud of me. No more gang bangin, no more doing drugs, I'm going to be a new person.

You might think you seeing me carrying a heater on me is cool. But it's not cool. I can be put away for a long time if I get caught with it. But it's not a good thing to carry one.

BIG BOY

Our next writer Shaun P aka Big Boy is writing to us from, we assume home somewhere in San Mateo, Ca. Shaun is a great writer, who once participated in our writing workshops in San Mateo County Juvenile Hall aka Hillcrest. We tell you this young man isn't afraid to talk and express his feelings. He's been through his fair share of trials and tribulations just like many of you, but that doesn't let him stop him from trying to become a better person. So please listen to Big Boy's personal story and use his words of courage as motivation to keep you going on the right path.

To My Mother - RIP

Mom I hope your doing okay up there. It's a better life than where I am. Mom, I always loved you and respected you. Even when alcohol got into your system. When alcohol got into your system, I know it was hard for you to quit. You tried, but nothing worked. We, the whole family, tried to help you. But nothing seemed to work. Dad, bro, and I lived with it for 5 years.

It was hard to see my own mother wasted on holidays and birthdays. I didn't have a good family X-mas or Thanksgiving or any major family holiday for years. We had some fun times. But not as much as I wanted to. You stole from me numerous times. But that don't matter to me because it feels like I owed you that. Just remember mom you will always be in my heart. I love you. Rest In Peace.

To My Brother

Bro, I pray for you every night before I got to bed in my cell. I pray to help you make the right decisions, pray so you don't become like me. I don't want to see you on the streets selling drugs or gang banging like me. You have a better chance than me to succeed in life. You have a future, me, I don't. I try my hardest to live on the streets. It's not easy, even if you got all your homeboys backing you up. I catch you a couple of times carrying my bat and/or knives around.

You might think you seeing me carrying a heater on me is cool. But it's not cool. I can be put away for a long time if I get caught with it. But it's not a good thing to carry one. I know I shouldn't but I'm trying my best to keep out of trouble. I know mom's, and dad's death was hard on you. It was hard on me too. But we got to go on with life now. I'm glad you moved to Washington. Just stay out of trouble. Member I love you. And I always got your back. Don't worry 'bout me. I'll manage.

My First Mind

Have you ever went to bed with something on your mind you have planned to do for the next day and when the day comes you feel a lil' bit tired so you don't do it. So you continue to lay down in bed, and your cell phone starts ringing you then answer the phone and it's your partner to give you a few minutes and you'll be there. So you jump out of bed, brush your teeth and wash your face, put your clothes on, grab your keys and get into the car rushing and not thinking.

I'm just headed over my partner's house to make this money. So while I'm driving a police pulls out behind me followed me up about two blocks. Me not thinking that he was about to stop me. He just patrolling the neighborhood. He pulls me over. When the police man gets to the car he asked me for my drivers-license and registration. Instead of you giving him the drivers license, you tell him that you don't have any. The Police Man then asked you why are you driving without a license. You tell him that you were just going up the street to your folk's house and park. So the police-man ask you for your name, social security number an your date of birth then he calls your name in to see if you're wanted for anything.

When he comes back to the car he tells you to sign this ticket and get your license before you come to court and they will dismiss it. You're thinking that you're bout to sign the ticket and he's going to let you go, but instead he tells you to step out the car because they have a warrant on you. So you get out the car and the Police Man then cuffs you. He pats your pockets for drugs and weapons. After patting you down he finds a sack of weed. He takes you to the police station and gives you an additional charge. While you're sitting up at the police station for a couple of hours waiting to make bond, you start thinking... "I should have followed my first mind."

Our next writer is writing to us from a correctional facility in Selma, Alabama. Tarrence was introduced to The Beat Within from Curtis Cook. Tarrence is a mindful writer, and his topics and stories have lessons you can learn. In his upcoming pieces Tarrence clearly states "Friends don't hurt friends," because it is true. So read up his stories and soak up some advice from our dear friend Tarrance!

While you're sitting up at the police station for a couple of hours waiting to make bond, you start thinking... "I should have followed my first mind."

"Friends don't hurt Friends"

Friends don't hurt friends in no kind of way. They help one another when the other seems as if things aren't going the right way. Friends don't let the other friends do something that he won't do himself. Because if he do, that's not a friend, he's an enemy.

The people that you be around everyday think about what he/she did for you when you were in the position of being locked-up. Did he/she tell you to go ahead, I'm with you, or did they say "No!"

I'm your friend, and a true friend is a person who loves and respects another person thinks about what situation you were in when you were in the position that put you in jail. And think Friends don't hurt friends. What where they?

See Me Down

So many want to see me down
But God gives me so many chances to get back up off
the ground

I strive very hard each day

When I am focused I pray

So many around me hate on me

For no reason at all

They laugh at me when they see me fall
I don't understand all these hateful hearts

I try to maintain and keep focus on god

But at times it gets very hard

When my mind is made up to do right

Many come my way to pick a fight

Because they can't stand to see me do right with a smile
on my face

They come around only to keep me down

My ego always helps me to fall in the trap.

*I strive very hard each day
When I am focused I pray*

MICHAEL MCKINNEY

Our next writer is writing to us from Union Correctional Institution in Raiford, Florida. Michael doesn't need much of an introduction as he consistently puts it down for our publication nearly every week. Michael is a very great writer with a lot of versatility. He writes on just about anything that comes to his mind, but always has some good words of wisdom for any of you readers to take. So without further or do give it up for Michael folks!

Growing Wise

Growing wise comes along with time. And living is about growing. Growing is about being wise. Because a wise man don't keep making the same mistakes over and over. And when the wise do make a mistake they learn from them. So when they see that it mistake again. They know how to go around it. And growing wise not an easy task. It's a struggle. But it would be worth the struggle.

To become wise and grow wise is not something that comes over night. But this I do know if I would have paid more attention to the wise saying. When I was young and growing up. I would have not brought up on my mother all the pain and suffering she had to go through when I was acting a fool and not being wise. And it don't take much sense to be a fool. But it takes good sense to wise, and grow wise. So never fear growing wise.

Why Me?

Dear Beat Within,

Today is the Fourth of July, Independence Day for the U.S.A. and I am reflecting on my current incarceration. I have seen in the news lately so many cases of prisoners across America found innocent and released from prison after spending a decade or more in prison unjustly. Time they will never get back. I wait for my day in court because I am one of them statistics incarcerated unjustly and illegally against my will. No one can know the unimaginable pain that builds up year after year knowing you're incarcerated unlawfully and that the system knowing they got you, doesn't want to let you go. They want to squeeze every minute, day, and hour from your life they can get and the system didn't care if you're innocent. In fact, no one cares if you're innocent, because once you're in prison you're just an inmate like everybody else and the cops don't care, the inmates don't care and if you don't have money for a private attorney the court doesn't care if you're innocent or how unjust your case is.

I'm talking from experience. I've been incarcerated since 1994. It has been a nightmare since the day I got arrested on May 23, 1994 for armed robbery. I was on parole. I first got sent to the pen in 1987 because I made the biggest mistake of my life that I regret worse than anything in my life. I was a follower and a wannabe when I was a youngster. I made the fooling mistake of taking the so-called homeboy's advice in the County Jail. I was fortunate that I grew up with a family that tried to raise me on the side of the law that doesn't go to jail or prison. No one in my family has ever been to jail or been arrested.

None of my grandparents, none of my parents, none of my aunts, uncles, or cousins have ever been arrested. I was a straight "A" student in school all the way to at least sixth grade. I started cutting school in sixth grade all the way through high school. I don't know how I passed but maybe they just wanted to get rid of me. So there I am in the county jail at age 22. I was on probation for driving a car without a valid license. It was either drive a car without a license or allow a drunk to drive. I didn't know how to drive, and I was seventeen years old. Got pulled over and got a ticket. Well to make a long story short. I'm in the county Jail for probation violation because I escaped from the County Jail Farm, minimum security.

It was a felony but the probation officer and district attorney along with the judge wanted to sentence me to one year in the County Jail. I would only do eight months out of a year. Upon my release I would be free without any probation or parole. Stupid inmates told me I should refuse their offer. They made me feel that if I took the deal I would be working with the police. I don't know why I was so stupid. I used to feel sorry for the inmates because I've seen so many so called homeboys bound to prison and it made me feel bad.

I had such a privileged life growing up and most of these so called homeboys grew up in the system going to Juvenile Hall and the CYA, I felt sorry for them they didn't know what freedom was really like. When they gave me their wise advice that I should refuse the deal I foolishly did what they said. I went to court with a rebellious attitude and told my public defender I didn't want the probation officer's recommendation or the DA's offer and I didn't care about going to prison. The so-called homeboys had convinced me that the Pinta is the bomb. The so-called homeboys glorifies prison with their tattoos of prison bars, prison gun towers, and telling me it's better in prison. If I took the deal I would be locked up the County Jail in maximum security the whole time because I walked away escape from the farm. I wouldn't want to go back to the farm.

They said if I went to prison I would only do a couple of months extra, but I would get to go outdoors and I could lift weights, eat a lot better than what the county jail feeds, they said there's all kind of homeboys in the Pinta and its like family. They made it sound like the Pinta was the place to go if you ever want to be a real homeboy. They didn't say anything to me about three years of parole after you're released, or that once you've been to prison basically your life is effed off. Parole ain't no joke and no one ever trusts you or believes anything you say. So I got sent to prison instead of my funky little one year in the County Jail. The court sentenced me to the minimum prison term it could, sixteen months, but upon release I would be on parole for three years and I could be sent back to prison anytime or as many times within three years of parole. When I got out of prison my first time I was never able to successfully complete my

Our next writer is writing to us from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, Ca. We want to welcome back James Gonzales. He delivers probably the most important piece in this issue. There is not BS from this writer. He steps up huge. We can only hope the youngsters who are on stuck will read this painful testimony. This latest contribution was written this past 4th of July. James touches on his incarcerated life, as well as his life outside of the system. He's been down since 1994 and is presently serving a life sentence under the three strikes law, while waiting on his appeal.

parole period without violating my parole for things I could not prevent, such as, being homeless and unemployed, or getting sick of reporting and failing to report. I wanted my freedom back. I got sick of it and I wanted out of the system. Finally, after going "AWOL" from parole again and realizing I was going back to prison again I decided I wasn't going back to prison any more.

Prison turned out to be hell, and I hadn't even seen the worst of it. In fact, the worst was yet to come that is now. I went on a crime spree, but I didn't want to hurt nobody. I cashed a bunch of forged pay roll checks and threw myself a going away party. I wasn't going back to prison and I called my parole officer and warned him that if he tried to arrest me I had a gun and I would shoot him. After I contacted my parole officer, I called San Jose police and I told them the same thing that I had a gun and if they tried to arrest me I would shoot first and I wasn't going back to prison.

The thing is that, I didn't have a gun. I didn't have the guts to take my own life, but I planned to make the cops blow me away if they tried to arrest me. When the time came, I was running down the street being chased by the police and yelling that "I have a gun, I have a gun." When I thought they heard me loud and cleared I turned around on the cops as if I had a gun, I stopped and turned around on the cops as if I had a gun and was gonna shoot at them but I didn't have a gun.

In my mind I expected them to stop and point their guns at me and shoot me in self-defense. There were at least a dozen cops and sheriff deputies chasing me. None of them even had their guns drawn, in fact they kept running at me and before I could react I got slammed into by a 200 lb. deputy. And I was on the ground dazed and in cuffs before I realized what had happened. There I was on my way back to prison for something real this time. Now I was officially a criminal. This was my first actual real criminal act doing a burglary, stealing pay roll check and cashing them in my name not caring because I didn't expect to be alive to pay the consequences.

I never had a juvenile record, nor been to CYA the court sentenced me this time to two years state prison and three more years of parole. I got sent to a real prison this time for two years, not the level two medium-security-lock-up like the first time. I got sent to New Folsom (Prison) level four, and I seen some really violence. In fact, I saved a man's life who was getting stabbed. I wish I would've known that an inmate could apply for time off his sentence for a heroic act that saves the life of an inmate or officer.

On this particular day I was walking across the yard with a fellow inmate when out of nowhere two other inmates ran up on my fellow inmate and they both began stabbing him, I immediately reacted by using my two hands to grab both of them by the scruff of their shirt collar and using their own momentum I slammed them both to the ground. This gave my friend time to get his mind together and both the gang members got up and began to swing at me with their pieces. I fought them off but got stabbed in the knee, and arm. The guards shot the mini-fourteen four times directly at us 'till finally the aggressors finally laid down. I got sent to another yard that was more mellow and I got to do my time real good.

I lifted weights everyday worked in the vocational bakeshop, played a lot of handball and horseshoes. Nothing ever really happened on "C" yard at New Folsom and this time there was that homeboy unity, that I was told about that I didn't see my first time in prison.

I got to parole after serving eighteen months of my first two year sentence and there I was going back on parole. I didn't last too long. I got a fun job working at Paramount Great America in Santa Clara and although the pay wasn't enough to sustain me in permanent residence, I got to spend every day of my life at the park. I used the employees locker room to shower everyday, I got employee discount on all my meals, and spent all my days

continued from previous page

off enjoying the park. My favorite ride was "The Edge", and my favorite attraction was the 80-Foot-Imax Movie Theatre.

My parole got violated because I didn't have a permanent residence, and I quit reporting again. I get sick of being forced to go all the way out of my way when I'm enjoying my life. So I went back to prison. The good part about it was I got to do my parole violation at San Quentin, which was hella cool. I was at home.

I got out in December 1993 and I looked around and all I seen was a life alone without a home, without a future, and too late in life for me to ever get a career as a legit tax-paying citizen. I couldn't go around my family because I knew they would act happy to have me around but secretly wouldn't trust me. Again I decided to gives my self a going away party and do something crazy to go out with a bang.

My only parent alive was my mom, my dad had passed away prematurely and unexpectedly in 1985, which he was a hardworking responsible man.

I could have lived my whole life at home rent-free if I wanted to. My dad loved me and I was his only kid in the whole world and he spoiled me. I went to my mom to tell her bye, only she didn't know I meant bye in this life. She lived in Southern California and I arrived at her door on Christmas day, December 25, 1993. My visit lasted a little longer then I expected it to. Of course I was AWOL from parole and in violation for leaving the county without permission. I got arrested on February 18, 1994 for violation and served 84 days CIM, Chino Institution for Men. Upon my release I was taken to Santa Clara County Jail because I had two warrants for failure to appear on two petty theft citations. Both of my cases were dismissed.

Why? I've been lucky most of my life even when things have been their worst or it seemed like a disaster, I've been lucky to avoid peril most of the time. They just dismissed these two petty theft could put me right back in prison for a long time. If you do the math, it would of been a petty theft, one year county time. But the 2nd petty theft would be a felony petty theft with a prior, plus a five-year prison enhancement, and two year prison priors. I was looking at some time.

I walked out of the Santa Clara County Jail on May 15, 1994, and got on a plane back to Southern California like a real stupid ignorant fool.

I ended up losing my life, and it was my fault. I really had to learn the hard way. On May 23, 1994 I got arrested for the last time for armed robbery. The case should have been dismissed. The prosecutor had no evidence against me, and the prosecutor witness did not appear in court. Some how during the jury deliberation the DA found some evidence that he took into the jury room totally illegally. This evidence was supposedly merchandise wit' tags on it that had the store name on them and it was illegal for the DA to go into the jury room and even more illegal to take supposed evidence into the jury room that wasn't documented admitted by the court evidence or introduced to the jury during the trial.

Take my lesson to heart, if the system wants you off the street they're gonna do whatever it takes to get you off the street, even if it is "prosecutorial misconduct". They don't care as long as they lock you up especially if you're poor, a drug abuser, thief, or homeless. You are an expensive liability to tax-payers. The prosecutor knew the jury couldn't find me guilty without the loot, so he came up with some loot from that store I supposedly ROBBED!!!

The jury convicted me and the court sentenced me to nine years state prison, plus that endless three years of parole. Well, I knew I had to appeal because the prosecutor committed "prosecutorial misconduct" which is a reversible error the court and asking the jury if my allegation is true.

What happened next is totally unbelievable. I got sent to prison and I was barely in prison for less than twenty days when someone slid a razor blade across my neck! (See my story "being 43" in the April 2008 issue of The Beat Within). After I lived, I discovered my public defender neglected to file an appeal for me and when I wrote the court I was told my appeal is untimely and rejected.

For the first time in my life I took my education serious and used my ability read by studying the law. My studying paid off and some of you should take heed in case you ever find your court appointed counsel, neglects to file an appeal for you in a criminal conviction and you try to file an appeal after the time to file has expired. I found in the California penal code that my public defender was bound by law to file an appeal in my behalf,

and that he legally was still my attorney. I found a case law of a case similar to mine. The count allowed a tardy appeal to be filed because court appointed counsel failed to file an appeal for a defendant.

My appeal got filed and I continued studying the law because I found I had a deep interest in it and I comprehended it well. In the end my conviction was affirmed. The state court of appeals doesn't allow defendants to appeal their own case and appointed me an attorney who didn't care to hear what I had to say and who did not mention my claim of the prosecutor's misconduct. Still, I had a parole date of May 23, 2000. I never made this parole date. I never imagined how sick and evil people really are but I guess if people are constantly around people in prison who have committed the most heinous crimes, it can make you think up some evil things you'd like to do to them people.

My life in prison from the first time in 1987 to my last prison term in New Folsom, I never in my wildest evil imagination ever dreamed up to do this kind of evil to my most hated enemy on earth. What "they" did to me was a new one on me. Even to this day it still blows my freakin' mind how these stinkin' rotten filthy cowards continue to do this punk shhh to me. I have gone through this so much I've adapted to it as a regular occurrence, but I still can't believe it and I feel so enraged furious because I am at their mercy in a helpless position. And I wonder what the hell did I do to give them the right to do this to me and get away with it. I'm not even going to say what it is. Not right at this time at least but one day when I'm not at their mercy. I want to snitch on them so bad.

What I did I had to do because my life was in grave danger. What I did was not a serious crime. It was not violent and no one was injured. I committed a harmless offense that I knew might result "misdemeanor" charges but that I had to, to avoid being killed. I was raised to believe in the system, to believe in the law and respect authority. You could never convince me in a million years that the system was corrupt or prejudice. What happened to me and the torture I've suffered these past fourteen years I've been in prison, now I believe the system is biased. I don't believe in the constitution and I believe that just as a person can be "black balled" in society if you know what it is to be black balled. The system can black ball you in prisons and everywhere you go, no matter where you go. They can make you suffer. Especially, if like myself you believe in speaking your mind and are a glutton for their evil illegal punishment. I don't care and I will continue to defy them to my last breath. I am black listed and I can't even complain to the courts that's how black listed I am.

I don't have any rights even though I've studied the law and constitution all these years and I know my rights. I don't even have basic human rights and I still don't know way. If I ever get my day in court to present my facts to the court about my unlawful imprisonment based on an illegally obtained conviction in which a racist D.A. and prejudiced judge abused their authority and took advantage of me in court as I tried to represent myself as my own attorney. I do believe the higher court will reverse my illegal conviction, but they sure ain't in no hurry to get to my case. It's as if they know my case is an obvious case there was serious errors and they don't want to tend to my case.

If I had money and a real lawyer, no doubt my case would have been heard months ago, or if my case was not such a reversible case no doubt the court would have got rid of it a long time ago. But I've got such a powerful reversible case and I know my law. How is the high court going to explain brushing off my case when I know my rights and I won't give up telling the world about the injustice and how I caught this weak misdemeanor case and the DA got away prosecuting it as a third strike felony and obtained her conviction in an illegal manner.

I was sentenced to the mandatory 59 years to life under the three strikes statute even though my crime was a misdemeanor and for the past eight years I've been living in hell waiting for my day in court to present my appeal to the 9th Circuit Court where my motion for a certificate of appeal has been sitting on the back burner since November 2007.

I bet my life I know my case is a reversible error based on the corrupt system, I use to have so much respect for. 'Till the 9th Circuit sets a date for my case I sit in prison on a illegal convictions in hell and against my will.

I respectfully ask The Beat to publish my strong piece and mail me a copy to me. Thank you very much, one love.

My Story

Dear, listeners and Beat Within. My name is Darrick Jordan my friends call me Rick, I just started reading the words, letters, and what I see is a little bit of me in each letter. I read I felt the same way most of you youngsters felt when I was a kid growing up in juvenile hall, youth authorities, boys ranch, jail, & prison I was in a gang from the age thirteen and since then it's all been down hill because I chose that life to live, gain acceptance and love. It wasn't what I really wanted but it was there and I thought it would be fun but let me tell you it's not it gets harder & harder and things get worst.

I'm 38 years old now sitting in prison doing four-years for drug sales. I say this because that almost cost me my life. I faced three-strikes and 25 to life in prison but thanks to a answered prayer from God I received four-years and not 25 to life.

Being from San Jose it's hard not to be a homie but I learned over the years there is no one you can depend on but some family and the lord above. I plan to be a youth counselor, and I will strive to accomplish that goal.

But I want you all to know girls, boys, men, and women if we put as much effort into doing good as we do bad we could get so much accomplished with so much little effort only we limit ourselves in what we can achieve in life. We, sometimes, are our own obstacles so when you come trying to figure out what's right from wrong and just think see how much happened, you are with yourself and others around you. I hope we can all change our lives. With that said I'd like to share this poem of encouragement and I send all my love and respect to you all that are listening and feel free to write me if you would like to have a friend big brother or just someone to hear you speak. I'm out!

Our next writer is writing to us from Deuel Vocational Institution in Tracy, Ca. Darrick aka Rick, as your about to read, has been through the life that a lot of you have lived. Gangs, drug sales, the halls, CYA, you name it. And look where it got him people. No where! Just straight back to Pen doing time. That's time that he's never getting back. So please take this time to read Rick's story and learn from his mistakes. This is where the "game" takes you! No where, just to dead end streets away from your family and loved ones!

Something In Common

We all have something in common yes you, and me
 We struggle through life trying to be free
 Free of the troubles we seem to find
 And from the alcohol and drugs that mess up our minds
 From a teenager to adulthood even as a kid
 Getting trouble for things that we did
 Gangs murder drugs or something to steal
 Acceptance revenge, getting high or trying to make a deal
 Where do we go wrong were does it begin
 The crazy thoughts the loneliness we feel within
 Surviving each day hoping to live a long life
 Worried if it will all end by a gun or a knife
 Look deep within your mind, body, and soul
 To achieve at least one set goal
 Weather it's to love, be good, finish school or be alive
 Don't ever give up push pull and strive
 For better times they soon lay ahead
 Realize it now before we all and up dead
 From the way that we live or a stranger on the streets
 For with help from one another bad habits can be beat
 Don't be shy and don't be ashamed
 We all must start somewhere to the end of this game
 Be there for me and I'll be there for you
 Us working together there's nothing we can't do
 So that aside your angel especially your pride
 And find the real you that you hold deep inside
 I can see it in you wanting to be free
 The skies the limit at what you can be
 So when you think your life is over just smile with a grin
 And read the words of wisdom
 From The Beat Within

JAVIER EEJA

Our next writer is writing to us from an Adult Detention Facility in Santa Rosa, Ca. He's part of a new string of writers coming from Santa Rosa. Javier really digs our publication and we hope he keeps on bringing his pieces our way. So lets hear what Javier has to say...!

Lesson Learned

You see I learned my lesson and the outcome was true
 Even though you love someone doesn't mean they love you

So before you give yourself to someone else
 Make sure they love you and nobody else
 And this I tell you girl so you wont get hurt
 A lot of men do know what a women is worth

He would up all his covers and sleep out in the rain
 He would help her through her problems and take away your pain

Cause that's the type of man I am
 I'm the type of man that would take a lady by your hand
 And show her, that I wanna get to know her
 Tell her that she's beautiful, and that I want to hold her

Eventually, it all be that way
 And I'll walk up to her, ask her, her name
 My name in gonzo, its nice to meet you

I was wondering if one day I could kick it with you.

DANIEL ARAGA

Our next writer is writing to us from a Correctional Facility in Lancaster, Ca. Daniel submitted his poem so he can vent out some of his frustrations, and let everyone know that he has a voice. And also trying to tell you young folks out there that prison is no joke! It's not a place where you want to be! Take it from him!

These Visions

So many years I've shed
 tears
 And tattooed my fears
 Waste years and disappear
 Trapped in this cage
 I build up hatred and rage
 Behind these bars I see no
 stars
 But I'm battle scars
 I fight against the crops
 Because my pride will not
 drop
 People hide behind
 smoking mirrors
 Because they fear us, but
 they never hear us
 Sporting our prison blues

To which we stay true
 From the outside of our
 faces

Deep down to our roots
 Steady lacin' up boots
 If you start to group up
 Might get shut down by
 the...

Who is in the tower
 And get laid in the ground
 I'm trying to tell you kids
 this place

Ain't no joke
 Come back up here with
 three strikes

Once again I told you kids
 this place ain't no joke.

Heart Of The Matter

Heart of the matter is the matter of the heart – or so the old song goes. What is the price of one's inner freedom to choose? What is more valuable than one's free will, and the liberty of the soul? I don't know, but something I read years ago, a book by a Romanian priest, Fr. George Calciu, has helped me to realize that our inner ability to choose who or what we're going to be is perhaps our most valuable and precious possession.

This happened in the late 1940's, after World War 2, when Joseph Stalin's Soviet troops were busy gobbling up Eastern European countries, and KGB agents were teaching these new government how to erect single-thought, uniform communist structures. In Romania at that time there was a popular Christian movement among university students and intellectuals, called "The Burning Bush".

Obviously, such a movement posed a serious problem to the new Marxist government, and so everyone who "wouldn't conform" would be jailed and "re-educated" in prison. This was the beginning of a terrible new experiment – not something ancient, not a work of fiction, but a modern horror tale that once again proved that "truth is stranger than fiction."

You see, the Romanian leaders reasoned, "These young people are simply misled by all this 'God nonsense', and so we only need to re-educate that, teach them to see the world from our perspective, and they will be quite useful for the future of our nation." And so, those who weren't spooked by the jail and verbal persuasions, began to be "broken down" through beatings, torture, starvations and various forms of brain washing – all of which have been perfected by the KGB in Communist Russia over the thirty years of Joseph Stalin's reign of terror: the science of destroying people's minds and consciences, and the "rebuilding" then through fear, threats, and accepting the "party line" – even if that meant signing confessions for anything and everything, even against your closest people and friends.

The university students were unprepared for this hellish ordeal. When some in their ranks began to collaborate with the government (and, of course, this shouldn't be surprising), the prison officials used this to turn friend against friend, forcing the weak and starved students to torture one another in order to get fed, to deny God and sign all sorts of paperwork against their families, and do everything that would completely obliterate all they upheld and stood for. Many tried to commit suicide by jumping off the top tiers of the prison, rather than endure the torture – or torture their friends. Isolated, robbed of their freedom and families, deprived of their humanity and violated under inhuman pressure, all the boys could do was what one later said, "You knew very well that the next day you would against say something against God. But a few moments in the night, when you started to cry and pray to God to forgive you and to help you, were very good."

This is important! Although the students were all broken in some degree, and were unable to withstand the diabolical "re-educations experiment" at the hands of the authorities, many held out hope, if only with tears in the night, and refused to willingly cooperate with the

Our next writer is our long time friend of ours Mikhail Markhasev. He's no stranger to our publication, as he's in every issue of The Beat nearly every week. He delivers powerful writing and powerful words of advice. Mikhail is an OG, he's made his fair share of mistakes, and now is sitting in Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, Ca, where he is dedicated to offer his experiences and opinions to help anyone that needs help to steer 'em away from a destructive path that they might be on. So without anything left to say, let Mr. Markhasev words do the rest of the talking!

inhuman regime. Later, after being transferred to other units and prisons, they came around older priests and seasoned prisoners, who were able to restore these broken boys spiritually and teach them how to withstand the evil onslaught, no matter what compromises were made in the past. The only ones who couldn't be restored, are the ones who willingly embraced the new agenda, and threw in the towel with the new government.

Why is this important to us today, in Californian prisons? Granted, we live in an isolated, detached reality (maybe that's a blessing, I don't know!), and cannot grasp what took place in Romania in the 1940's, or in Cuba in the 1950's, or in China in the 1960's or what's taking place in North Korea and Sudan today. They're your "rights" are only a word, and there is no ACLU or "Prison Legal Office" fighting the good fight for "offended" prisoners.

But, the bottom line is that the struggle to remain human in an inhuman environment is a daily struggle for every prisoner on this side of the barbed wire – in a place where kindness is weakness, where compassion is foolishness, and where "turning the other cheek" is a naïve joke, if not a fatal mistake...You see, the guards need not "strip us of our humanity" – we are accomplished in that ourselves, by fighting one another in every yard, in every institution. We ourselves relinquish our freedom to anger and hatred, to indifference and malice – we give Satan what he is unable to take from us, by refusing to love. This is a basic spiritual reality, and our greatest tragedy. I see this in myself whenever I belittle another prisoner of think myself better than the next man.

What happened in Romania is recent, and there are survivors on both sides: the torturers and the tortured. It's a living witness not only of the horror experienced, but also of the quiet, eternal triumph, achieved in the very pit of hell. No, not through revolutionary upheaval or fiery rhetoric, but in the still of the night, in the tears lifted up by those too feeble to pray and too broken to praise the God Whom they had denied that day. This is the power of love – not our love, that's easily mangles and crushed under pressure – the power of God's restoration after everything "our's" has been ripped off by a stronger adversary.

Prior to overcoming the visible evil of the oppressive regime that had taken captive fallen hearts, the Romanian students overcame the evil in their own hearts by choosing to suffer through what St. John of the Cross-termed as "the dark night of the soul". Yes, today 20th century regimes are but a dark, shameful blot in our history books, but it is such testimonies that enliven my own feeble, small-as-a-mustard-seed faith in the crucified and risen Christ, Who by His death has destroyed death and to those in the tombs is still bestowing life!

Although the students were all broken in some degree, and were unable to withstand the diabolical "re-educations experiment" at the hands of the authorities...

This Life We Lead

This life ain't good enough
 Cause I'm headed nowhere fast
 Time keeps on slippin' and passin' me by
 No matter how hard I try
 I feel as though sometimes I just can't let go
 Because I keep comin' back, how many times?
 My first! My last! I don't know!
 Is this truly the life that I've chose
 Stuck in Tracy, hot weather
 Ain't nothin' better than Dear John letters
 Yeah my girl fell off
 All my so called friends are M.I.A. or lost
 No longer active I even went soft
 But not at heart I keep it trill
 Right from the start
 So I'm never off track
 This is now I never ever want to come back!
 I will have the last laugh
 But for now after laughter comes my tears
 Why you ask?
 Simply because I'm still here
 So this is a wake up call
 For all you young G's that's never been behind these
 walls.

Our next writer is writing to us from Deuel Vocational Institution in Tracy, Ca. Brandon a.k.a. Jilla is pretty damn good writer that brings a lot of knowledge for any of you readers to soak up. He delivers his pieces raw and uncensored without any fear of letting everybody know his true feelings. So please give it up for Jilla people!

The Beat
 Wrecker

Walk Beside Me

Baby, walk beside me tonight
 So full of life and divine light
 Hand in hand walk beside me
 When my eyes gaze into yours I know
 That I am forever complete
 A love that nothing can defeat
 Walk beside, baby
 When I'm with you I feel so secure and loved
 Happy and free
 Sharing our emotions and trust soon you will see,
 Walk beside me
 For you're my destiny
 And real, real soon together
 We shall forever be.

Dedicated to All Women Locked Down

Baby, come here, here let me whisper in your ear
 First thing I would tell you that 'I love you'
 Unconditionally
 A love that is divine and untouchable
 When I'm with you
 I feel so happy and free
 Our love it was destined to be
 This love it could never grow old
 We stay fresh and ever so bold
 Baby, take my hand and grab a hold
 Here I am on bended knee
 Asking you to forgive
 Please, please baby listen to me
 Forgive me for every word or wrong doing that I've done
 My deepest insides and the bottom of my heart is
 where this is from
 For when I'm with you I'm at my best
 You make me better and nothing less
 I love you baby I love you
 As if it were my very last breath

TREVOR WILSON

Midnight

It's a quiet as night
 There's a battle
 It was a fight
 I try and I try with all my might
 There's nothing I can do, it gives off such a fright
 When all of the sudden I now have a "kite"
 It brings me excitement it brings me fear
 When all it really brings is some insight
 I write and write back to this insight
 Then within moments the day begins to become more
 bright
 Now I must clean
 To be serene
 I then become so bright
 Shining so much light
 Just like a sunbeam
 I read and read all through the night

Our next writer is writing to us from an Adult Correctional Facility in Santa Rosa, Ca. He is a new writer to our publication. Trevor is locked up fighting for his freedom and writes as a way to vent out all his frustrations and angers. So give Trevor a short moment of your time and read his creative poem!

Trying to put past the fright I fight
 Of going to sleep each and every night
 I say a prayer
 Now I lay me down to sleep
 Pray the lord my soul to keep
 I pray to you Lord for some insight
 I pray to you Lord will all my might
 I close my eyes tight and deep and soon fall fast asleep
 Soon I awake with screams
 All of which I wish not to see,
 I begin to weep
 For I see that this is no dream,
 For you just witnessed my scene
 Now I ask wouldn't you want to scream?

'How Do I Love You'

How do I love you?
 Let me count the ways
 I love you to the depth and height my soul can reach
 When I'm feeling out of sight
 For the ends for being an ideal place
 You belong in my heart is where these beautiful
 thoughts play like a love song
 I love you to the level of every day's quiet need
 As I write you by sun or the dim night light through the
 bars in the window
 I strive through out these lonely times
 Thinking of a way to provide you with an expression of
 love
 So you know above all
 To make you smile comforts my course through out the
 day
 I love you with the breath, smiles, and tears of all my life
 And if God choose I shall but love you better after death.

That will be it on love this week beaters, at least love for
 a lover. I'm in hopes that y'all dig what I brought ya' way
 so far. Until the next time. Striving for betterment wit' yo'
 boy Playboy Ant.

'She Is'

She is the women I love forever in a day
 for everything she possesses can never be erased away.
 She is just and her beauty lives with kindness
 Her love has opened my eyes and repaired the blindness
 that has dwelled inside of me
 She brings everything I desire and need
 I plea my love and recognition
 As I commend her for being a lady
 I'll express that same lady is the breath of my soul
 That I'll grow old loving , until death and then after. She is.

Unmasking Minds

Unmasking minds I'll be a genius in time
 I'm a gigolo of poetry, a ghost in description
 I've already seen my destiny nothing can stop my mission
 I'm a true optimistic, that means I can find hope in prison
 Ever since my inauguration into the poet's hall of fame
 I've set out to be the Don of poetry, poetically changing
 the game
 Unmasking minds I came to empower your sight
 My words transform into objects, revealing images that
 are bright
 My words are legendary, the result of paper and pen
 This poem is headed to (Cali), to The Beat Within.

*I'm a true optimistic, that
 means I can find hope in prison*

Our next writer is writing to us from Deuel Vocational Institution in Tracy, Ca. Playboy Ant is fairly new to our publication. Ant has seen it and done it all when it comes to the streets. He's been on the turf, he was a product of his environment. He was out there just like a lot of you young cat's out there trying to make a name for himself. And now take his words of advice as all that street life didn't get him no where but back in the Pen facing hard time. He writes with intentions on trying to reach out to any of you readers out there, and emphasize that this is not the life you want to lead. He's also a versatile writer and this week he delivers a few pieces on topics about love.

My Last Cry'

I want you to take my heart cause my love with out you I'd rather not have a heart no more. After what I say there will be nothing left to tell, so listen carefully to where you will forever be stored. For this is for you my whole heart sings and you my whole heart gives out one last cry. For these reasons you will find my love is pure and genuine. Never did I attempt to deceive you, I don't have any idea why you turned away in the first place. All I know is I miss sending you kisses through my fingertips. I want you to read this love letter out loud.

Read my letter with your lips. Is it now music to your ears? Do you miss this personal poetry that always brings a smile to your face? Is it your afraid of the love I show? Is there any other you can honestly say with all your heart brings you joy and possesses the qualities I do? Would you like to start all over again, start something new? I'd like to close with this above all I want to be friends. Though you know with one last cry my goal is to take our friendship to the limits of no end and that is to share my life with you. My heart desires are obvious for even today I know I'm still in love with you.

What's Up?

What's up with it Beaters it's Playboy Ant. Getting' at you this week with some poetry. The subject is based on love and the poems I've wrote you will find are meant for a life long lover. With that said let me get to it.

CURTIS COOK

Our next writer is writing to us from his home state in Selma, Alabama. Curtis has been a writer for our publication for quite some time now. Curtis is creative writer and writes very creative poems. He doesn't usually tackle on any political issues, or any poems related to his life, and that's what makes him a very unique writer. As he always submits poems that we all get to indulge because it's something different every times he writes. He doesn't talk about violence, he doesn't talk about drugs, but he comes through and delivers poetry as if he was still a young kid without a single care in the world. So please give it up for Curtis people!

You Can't Do Without....

My poetry
 Does for the brain
 What
 Chocolate
 Does for your mouth
 It stimulates
 Your
 Taste buds
 You can't
 Do without.

I was sentenced to the mandatory 59 years to life under the three strikes statute even though my crime was a misdemeanor and for the past eight years I've been living in hell waiting for my day in court to present my appeal to the 9th Circuit Court where my motion for a certificate of appeal has been sitting on the back burner since November 2007.

read the rest of James Gonzales' BWO piece on page 51

